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Esquire

MAY 1998

MAN AT HIS BEST

THE MAN WHO
MISTOOK A
WOMAN FOR
A SHEEP:
THE TRUTH
ABOUT CLONING

THE ULTIMATE
TRAVEL
WARDROBE

LIFE AND HOW
TO LIVE IT:
LESSONS FROM
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JOHN McCAIN:
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Denzel Washington

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PHOTO: ROMEO COTS. BY JOHN MAGRINI



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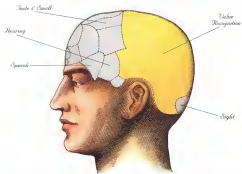
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Three plans for stuffing your satchel: efficient, flexible, elegant clothes packed for business, for eighteen holes and dinner at Doris, and for a day on your best friend's sloop.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MURPHY



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TOMMY HILFINGER



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A cinematic photograph of a desert landscape at dusk. In the foreground, four people wearing cowboy hats are gathered around a campfire on a rocky outcrop. A dark horse stands to the right. In the background, iconic desert buttes are silhouetted against a purple and orange sky.

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On the Uma-nity

In *Men's* first story on self-reflective celebrity Uma Thurman, we saw the pregnant actress exposed while eating, drinking, and (allegedly) canoeing.

Uma Thurman is everything I've longed for in a main authentic, intelligent, modest, contemplative, anecdotal, and gorgeous. Her omnipresent spirit illuminates the mythological beauty of her flesh. After reading Miss Ukiyovitch's interview with Uma, I found myself wishing for the first time that I were a guy.—**Edwin Hawke**

—BENJAMIN ELRO
Salem, Utah

Letters to Larry

Larry Carle's poem for adopted son ("Letter to My Son, You Are Me," March) inspired many readers to write letters of their own.

Having read the latest installment of personal letters, I feel compelled to reply this feeling: You are all a bunch of bastards. It wasn't enough that you showed us that you can deliver quality interviews and analyses and find the best and brightest know-how now you give us truth. The truth of pain and love, of life and death. This is why I love to hate you wonderful bastards. Many publications are comfortable doing the same old, same old until the bomb drops, but *Esquire* is the one that will grow during the long time in between. Thank you, and please don't stop. I can get plenty of diseases, but I can't get enough of *Esquire*.

—MICHAEL A. RABKIN
State College, Pa.

Seldom in mainstream journalism has the truth been so freely expressed as in your March issue, featuring the work of Larry Carle and Charles Bowden ("Bad Luck on an Otherwise Fine Night"). Both writers examined the heart of human craving. Carle brought me to tears with his expression of love for an adopted son. Bowden made me angry, perplexed, and awed by his exacting anatomy of addiction in *Phono, Texas*. If I could only write so well, if I could only understand so completely the joys having read their work and heard their stories.

—WILLIAM ANTHONY CONNELLEY
Woodlands, Tex.

Once in a while you pick up a magazine and read something that makes you say, "I think I'll keep reading this one for the next hundred years or so." In "Letter to My Son, You Are Me," Larry Carle was able to put into words what I am sure so many fathers feel for their sons, natural and adopted, yet struggle to say aloud. This is definitely a keeper.

—JOHN F. ROSENBERG
Philadelphia, Pa.

Robbie Carle truly is a poet, his father a genius. I used to think I was the most biased of all adopted children until I read Larry Carle's beautiful and moving letter. I will save it forever.

—CHRISTINE KING
Los Angeles, Calif.

Precoital Agreement

Larry Doyle had shown the love of love in "My Heart, My Rules" (February), prompt- ing reactions from

the romantic:
Larry Doyle is a treasure. I'm sure I'm not alone. (My fingers are crossed.)

—PAUL M. ROSE
Sage Hill, Fla.

the male:
While Larry Doyle is to be lauded for his clear-eyed and highly useful memoirism concerning relationships, we wish to take exception to one—and, indeed, only one—point. To wit, under Sunday Morning, a 30-u-30, the Sunday New York Times, clause (b) "No reading aloud." We feel this stipulation to be a bit peculiar to the writer's own house, unlike all of the other houses, which are generally useful. His article, in some instances raising reser-

vable assumptions (bagels, the availability of half-and-half, the choice of newspaper), in others laying down ground rules that leave latitude for individual preference (terro settings, and music, in context), is valuable in that it establishes no points that, although commonsensical, have not heretofore been set down explicitly in an age when even the sacrosanct is up for grabs.

—S. BERTHEAN BAKER AND
T. EVERETT CHASE, ENO
New York, N.Y.

and the all-around useless.
Larry Doyle's "My Heart, My Rules," a primer for the world's obviously-compulsive, should be required reading for all control freaks. It was probably more compelling, however, in its original German.

—DAVID SHORIN
Southaven, N.Y.

Fine-tuned

Congratulations on acquiring the services of Dean Wachman, of the band Lulus, as a contributor (John in His Best Month). As one of the most talented, original musicians in the "alternative" arena, his comments and recommendations on the music scene are valuable stuff. Besides, it's nice to hear from a musician who can actually articulate his thoughts without using the f-word or mentioning rehab.

—JACOB FRIEDMAN
Anderson, Ill.

Letters in the column should be mailed to "The Sound and the Fury, *Esquire*, 1230 Ave. of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10020, or sent by e-mail to esquire@earthlink.net. Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

PETER LINDBERGH

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contributors



John Edgar Wideman first met David Wellington on the set of *Melvin X*. "He was familiar with my books, *Dethroned* and *Rapier*, and I was familiar with his work," says Wideman, the PEN/William Faulkner Award-winning author of fourteen books. "Before I left, he mentioned the possibility of going together professionally, and the *Go* Commission blew a second occasion for it." Wideman, who is also a professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, continues, "There's no much common ground between us and we would have kept talking for hours." "This Man Can Play" begins on page 68.



Tom Janold didn't ever wonder if he should write about animal breeding; he simply had no choice in the matter. "The idea literally came to me in the middle of the night," says the veteran National Magazine Award winner and *Esquire* writer at large. "A little voice whispered to my ear. *Animals*. Then it said, 'If you really want to know about human beings, first you need to know about animals.'" Over the next five months, Janold immersed himself in the world of coon and sheep and pigs, and what he discovered was "a weird and complex story that's not as much about animals as it is about man as Creator." His article begins on page 76.

When it came to **Michael Paterniti**, it wasn't so much about going straight. "I am not usually an eater of processed species," this when he read that Françoise Mureau had chosen the legendary (and illegal) *arabesque*, a country-sized song bird native to southern France, for his last meal, he decided he had to try it. Many weeks and hundreds of phone calls later, Paterniti finally procured his reverse meal—and "The Last Meal" (page 84) is the chronicle of his gastronomic adventure. "It was an all-body experience," says Paterniti, who lives in Maine and is working on a book to be published in 2009 by his Old Press. "Cooking a meal is meant to be the most intense eating experience a person can have."



After shooting the photographs that accompany "The Last Meal," **Geoff Kern** hasn't been able to look at his pet lovebird in quite the same way. "I have a house full of children and animals, including a nasty little lovebird," says Kern, who won a Grammy in 2001 for album art photography and was nominated in 2002 for the All-Time Entertainment Award for Magazine Work. "The every time I look at her now, I can't help but think there's not a lot of difference between my lovebird, in her cage and in a robin in a concrete dish."

It seems like just about everyone in the Southwest has a swimming pool in his pool, so Arizona native **Ron Carlson** didn't have to look too far afield for the proletrian images that document his weekend story "Tired Swims" (page 96). Carlson, whose fiction has appeared previously in *Esquire*, is the author of five books, including *The Rital Kids*, which will be available in paperback from Viking Penguin later this year. "Frankly, I spend many of my best hours living absolutely puzzled," he says. "So I try, in my stories, to navigate strange terrain—and to come back with whatever kind of map I can."

While reporting his piece "John McCain Walks on Water" (page 94), writer at large **Charles P. Pierce** accompanied the senator up into the mountains of Arizona one afternoon for a television show. Problem was, McCain showed up wearing a Mickey Mouse polo shirt, which didn't fly with the ABC producers. "Not that I know McCain is taking me if he can borrow my old gun jacket," says Pierce, who lives outside Boston and is at work on a book about Alzheimer's disease, to be published by Random House. "You won't usually see me in the documentary but you'll see my jacket."



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What does a father owe his son? Beyond the customary chromosomal dose—and current case law notwithstanding—it all comes down to this:

the Talk. Now, Daniel Washington may believe that fathering a son is an ongoing, evolving conversation (see page 66), but we say you can wait those talks and talk those talks and there is still going to be, eventually, that eight-pound lump in your throat: the Talk.

The Talk we are talking about, of course, is composed of the most terrifying sentences any father can utter: the moments when he imparts to his son the sum total of his useful knowledge, his chosen statement of what it means to be a man, namely: What's the deal with women?

We remember our Talk. It took place in our parents' room on the edge of the bed. Dad with his hand on our shoulder, on the morning following the night another father had caught us with his daughter on the stoop of a house in which baby-sitting was patently occurring. Our father said:

Son, they teach you about sex in school, right? Well, they can tell you much more about the mechanics than I can. But (d) like it or not something to that. Son, you will find, as you get older, some women are nicer than others. You don't want those women. The only men your mother and not on anyone.

There were a few minutes more of it, mostly a madman monologue of the above phrases and, at the end, a big bull hug. We took great solace in the Talk. It confirmed for us what we had been hearing in the schoolyard—that there were indeed way cases out there, somewhere.

Our Talk took place in simpler times, so be sure, and we wonder how

much of it we'll be able to recall when it's our turn to Talk. There are certainly more backwards to consider, although we imagine they deal with those simply in school. What we might add to that is currently beyond our comprehension and growing more confusing each day.

When we were young, and sex wasn't even one of the boys, now it's something you get in the boys' box. There isn't

high school, a fifteen-year-old girl and a sixteen-year-old boy stepped up to the plate in front of the entire class on a date. (These teachers were out of the room, making a phone call, and presumably would not have allowed it had he been present.) And there appears to be some evidence that even reportedly grown women can be convinced to perform oral sex repeatedly on married men who argue that anything more would be silly.

So, the world is your oyster.

But then we have to consider that study from the University of Washington, the one that this year concluded that marriages last only when the husband does

whatever his wife tells him to do. Thus, in our experience, generally involves being told to do something that, left to our own devices, we would rather not do. It almost never involves being told to go out and make some one and sex out of one of the easy ones.

Son, perhaps you should just do what you're told.

Though this apparently wasn't enough for Rebecca Cleland, who was charged in February with having her husband on-and-off-pulled for the insurance money. Or for Betty Lou Beem, Marilyn Plante, Catherine Thompson, Virginia Lazzarini, all currently serving on death row for arranging to have their married deers departed.

Son, life insurance is a rip-off. What'll it be, a whole and goddamn it.



even first, second, and third base anymore, it's twenty, forty, and sixty dollars for anal, vaginal, and the combination planet, according to a story we just read about thirteen-year-old hookups in New York City. Outside big cities areas, where attorneys aren't so high, it's far more affordable. In January, in a small Texas



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Man at his best

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if you aren't mad
at someone.



The Indie It Boy

Sam Rockwell is twenty-nine and about to be in a lot of movies you're seeing if you're seeing independent movies without performance in the next realist drama *Green Days*. The comedy *Steak 'Em*, and the director study *Jerry and Tom*. He has awarded Richard Poirer as the most frequently listed actor in movies getting a good buzz at the Sundance Film Festival. Larry and Tom were one of the festival's big

sites, to Milano for a reported \$2.75 million. Actually he has already been in a lot of movies, in small parts and starred, with Jane Fonda in *For the Ladies of Moonlight*, for which the New York Times review compared his appeal to that of Drew Pitt. In *Dead* he has an anachronistic character that has all over him, is difficult to describe. It's sort of a Jack Nicholson-meets-Tom Cruise kind of thing. Although the characters he plays in

Screening Rockwell

Green Days In this fully self-directed film, Rockwell plays what is elegantly referred to as a landscaper in a period community whose involvement with a socially self-conscious couple's young daughter sets off shock waves, envy and rage. A hit-man movie without an ostensible Rockwell, Joe Mantegna, and Charlize Theron play three generations of Chicago doers in the beautifully acted and compellingly directed dark comedy *Safe Haven*. A screwball caper that puts Rockwell with the always quietly spectacular Steve Zahn.

the Sundance film festival at all sites, he says: "It's all of them looks like it's for good. So it's a pleasure to watch."

Esquire: Ring what's your first love?

Rockwell: It's a romance in a house. I got it about ten years ago in San Francisco.

And what's its symbolism?

Well... it's actually a pun, and it's supposed to be on your call but I don't know that when I got it I knew I was going to get a house and want it to be a little bit of a symbol of some kind like a pen or something. So it's supposed to be a hanging clock. It was but it on your call then you're supposed to have a low hanging... So really, I'm just an ass, because I didn't get the pun and I put it on my arm.

That might be a problem if you were, like, in the Navy, but I'm sure it doesn't matter at Sundance. What was your first role?

Well, the first thing I did was a play when I was ten years old. I used to wear my mom's New York in the summer, and that's how I got into acting, through improvisational theater in New York and through the East Village Summer Theater.

Do you always wear baggy pants?

Yeah, OK, yeah. She was behind me. She is ▶

still bohemian. Still as bohemian as they get. They don't come more bohemian than my mother. I played Pia Zampino and Humphrey Bogart.

How about your father: what did he do? My dad was into an actor, but he dropped out of acting when I was about five, when they separated and my father and I moved to California. It was like *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*, except that we were broke. Then he got remarried when I was nine, and we had kind of a middle-class lifestyle after that. Before that, it was a little rocky sometimes, we moved around a lot.

How you noticed that there's a theme in your last few movies—the theme that were all Sundance and also of *Moonlight*—of chain-smoking, wild swimming, trawlers, and you being beaten up by more than one person?

Yeah. I need to play somebody who beats somebody up. Well, I later discover up in *Boyscout*. I have one line in that. And I get to hit a lot of people in *Jerry and Marge*.



Jack went with Matt Damon to *Boyscout* along with George Clooney in *Boyscout*



And you did an episode of *Arrested Development*. Were you beaten up by *Boyscout*?

I did one episode right before *Arrested Development*, so I had long hair and I played a chain smoker. And I did get beaten up by Dennis Franz, actually.

I think there's quite a distinction. How can you tell you're the next big thing besides reading about it in the press? I can't tell. I think maybe I picked the wrong



See Clearly Now

For those of us who have been forced to ape the old nutty professor look here we at the newsmagazine resurrection of chunky horn-rimmed glasses (these last few seasons—good news, most major designers are cutting down their eyewear lines, and endless frames are coming around again).

During the fits of the last decade, French intellectuals slipped obsolete and read *Rembrandt* through rimless glasses at Les Deux Magots. Teddy Roosevelt shoring some more Congress on the clean and classic frames. And today many celebrities, perhaps hoping to appear more serious without detracting from their movie-star looks, are venturing out in public sporting them. Rimless glasses are now the technology at its finest: two corrective lenses vertically suspended in space on either side of your nose with an intricate device coming between the lenses precisely enough to keep your face looking for the clean classic (unadorned) thinwork and temples completely to the sides with said hardware suspended at the level of the plastic, and that looks as if it could be a jeweler's workbench. Stay there on. They're absolutely hot, and not in your nose as comfortably as they be. Take a look in the mirror not bad at all. How nice some poetry. *Boyscout* how your portrait taken by Herb Ritts.

—Steve Chan

year to be the Parker Proxy of Sundance. If I did make a splash, it was last year in *Boyscout*. *Moonlight* what about *Moonlight* who about me in that in the New York Times was a like thing. I'm not sure I have a lot to be thankful for. *Boyscout* I think it's amazing how much power the Times has. Although I guess people love *Kristin* on its own merits, even if it's hard for me to see why.

Well, you know, people get swept up in that romantic thing. It was about for the time. I had a good time at *Boyscout*. And I cried and ohh deh deh deh but *Rembrandt* is the film I did watch and over again. Pound for pound, that's the movie.

And much more romantic, actually. You said in your *Sundance* press that you're looking for a girl.

Oh, Jesus, yeah. I shouldn't have said that; that was stupid. I was just looking for somebody at the time. I'm not now. I'm done with women. I'm still in love with my girlfriend Santa Claus.

What's in London doing *Boyscout*? Well, if you were looking, where would you be looking for?

I don't know. *Arrested Development*. All right. In *Boyscout*, in honor of the section in which this is appearing, where are you a fan at your best?

When I'm acting. That's the only thing I really know how to do. And I'm still not even really good at that.

—Matt Damon

Rule No. 104: If you work in a cubicle, you work in a cubicle.

Rule No. 130: Melon should be more popular.

Rule No. 51: Laugh at your enemies. It couldn't possibly make things worse.

Rule No. 83: If Bill Gates were good looking or well dressed, people would like him better.



Photo by David LaChapelle, London, England, 1999

The Long Green

This book is a packhorse's dream: it's at the heart (and head). No wait: that's from Love and Death. Let a smart one, *Investor Green* is a personal finance how-to, to provide no-BS, apple-free, jargon-free financial info to those whose financial future is suggested by bogus promises like "seven bucks to buy now." As the real market has crashed, it's made investors at plenty, too many! After *Investor Green* sits on the shelves, don't—no, it's not to get those people in the game, or in fact to convince what they were misled—was an eight-page, non-sensational, readable, accurate and stylish of my job. The *Green* Magazine Guide to Personal Finance (Doubleday) \$17.95 is the culmination of what the *Green* always tried to do and what I try to do in my *Green* column here at *Esquire*. It speaks insight about all aspects of personal finance—debt, home buying, insurance, taxes, and every rock and cranny of investing. This "review yourself" business is uniquely and irremediably. So let's leave it at that. I worked real hard on this book, it's pretty darn good, and there's a decent chance its cost is tax-deductible (if you use it for investment advice). —DAN KARAN




You're going to need a new toilet seat. Oh, maybe not today, maybe not even soon. But, I trust me, the day will come. Because wood chips and plastic cracks. Because hinges get rusty and bolts snap because things—especially the things that turn by your life today weigh—fall apart. Who knows when or why? For me, it was a new apartment with a small bathroom and a creaking, brown, wooden stool of a seat with insufficient clearance. A man wants comfort, he needs clearance. And besides, it stinks.

I can't tell you what kind to get—it would sooner presume to assume your freedom—but I can tell you where to get it. Home Depot. Holy heaven! Ten after five, using high-top boots, throw one of each style, surface, and hose hangs in the boxes stacked upon the shelves: soft, hard wood, plastic, laminated, and, split front and back, all in a profusion of colors and rowdies in nature get belated in purpose to her call. They are not only plentiful, they are also cheap. So be bold. Change your life. Take two. But also take your time. After all, it's the Home Depot department where no average, national, ex-landscaper can outperform you. —Scott MacB



Music: no matter, John Lane is cool. Unmistakably so. Maybe even to a fault, depending on what side of Fourteenth Street you're coming from. But then, he's been working on the downtown thing long enough that he better be. His music, whenever you want to call it, is cool, too. And good, if that whole downtown collection (the jazz/rock/chronic beat/paper bouillabaisse, all in the name of irony) isn't itself becoming cliché. And, besides, haven't we heard most all of it in Leslie Bowler's and Henry Thaw's (a band called "Luna") (bowls) isn't Thaw's got—no, it's not a bad thing. His newest efforts, *Guest of All Stars*, with the Lounge Lizards and the sound track to his series of book documentaries, *Pushing with John*, are two of his very best. He's comfortable and conversant, as always, with a number of musical dialects, and his rich and scenic songwriting has become something rather nice: pliable, searching, Coltrane-like, quite at home dancing in the upper register. Maybe he's even better at that of a camera, taking on the rare occasion that he shows up onscreen. He's a host, if not a natural. Who wouldn't love to see him revisited with Richard Dinko, rumbling about the dog track? (John has all that reverence built in.) Faking with John his hilarious onscreen and up coming soon to the Independent Film Channel, he goes to faraway places with his organic pets (William Dinko: Dennis Hopper, Sam Worthington, and so on). It's the kind of on-screen depression only a really cool guy could get away with. —Michael F. Aguiar

STYLING: JANE BUNNELL; ILLUSTRATION: MARK MATTHEW

A photograph of five male rowers from the US National Rowing Team. They are standing in a row, smiling, and holding long wooden oars with red and blue blades. They are wearing dark blue athletic singlets and white or red briefs. The man on the far left has "Shipshape Jockey" printed on his singlet. The background is plain white.

Shipshape Jockey

Let 'em know you're  **JOCKEY.**

The US National Rowing Team
Princeton, NJ
January 6, 1998



Gordon's Oeuvre

He insists this story is true: Gordon Ramsay does, and even though it is the level of thing he would make up, he would do so only to make you happy. Because he is a chef and a bon vivant of the first order, the kind of restaurant you want hopping to your table. So when Gordon Ramsay opened his Chicago joint, twenty years ago this month, he named it Dordon Ramsay. Of Gordon's, because the sign maker was charging \$50 a letter—just went for the apostrophe, too—and cash was tight. His original chef masterpiece the place even opened! Then, on the first payday, the new chef got so drunk that he didn't show for lunch the next morning. And there stood our hero in an empty kitchen with scant food in the cooler and nobody to make the salad.

Of just such necessity is chicken born. A Mexican dishwasher happened to have plenty of refried beans on hand. The avocado were ripe. And Sinclair, no chef himself, began mixing just about the only thing he knew how—conchitas Mexican omelettes. Buffy, hot eggs and rich beans with a cold spicy sauce and sour cream—the kind of thing that doesn't require anything exotic and that most guys can throw together while recovering from too much booze. This May, Sinclair puts the Hot & Cold & Spicy Omelette on his menu again, although the price has crept up from the original \$2.95 to more like \$12.95 and a dollop of cooler might be involved. But then, as Sinclair explains, "he don't use refried beans out of the cans anymore." You eat, of course, if you want.

A Man's Barbie

It's spring, the start of grilling time, when the backyard crusader, temps in one hand, grill cover in the other, prepares for the primal roasting of the flesh. Intoxicated by the aroma of searing meat and the anticipation of victory, he lights the battle at the middle-class man, the battle for the perfect steak. He must choose his weapon wisely. He can use the gas grill, but then he does not light one fair fight, and he accepts reluctantly the superior option is the charcoal grill: it's the only way to get the flavor of the charcoal. It's the only way he will taste the glory of truly vanquishing the steak. The very best a man can use, for flavor and durability, is made by Weber, which has been forging them for forty-seven years. But be warned: The Weber is not for the timid. To best unleash its power, you must first master it. The grill must let the lighter fluid burn off and the flames die until no coals are white-hot before cooking. Likewise, he must learn to control the temperature by the number and configuration of the coals. However, once he achieves mastery he will understand: no griller every piece of meat he sees. And therein lies ease.

—Gordon Ramsay



The Gordon Hot & Cold & Spicy Omelette (serves two)

4 large eggs
1/4 cup milk
butter or canola oil
1/2 cup refried beans
1/2 cup sour cream
1 cup salsa
1 ripe avocado peeled and chopped
1/2 cup cilantro or parsley, finely chopped

Crack eggs into a large mixing bowl. Add milk and beat until frothy. Heat a heavy

concrete pan or skillet with a bit of butter or canola oil to just sizzling, and pour in egg mixture. Turn flame to medium-low and move pan back and forth. Stir omelette until it begins to set but is still wet. Add spoonfuls of warm beans, sour cream, salsa, and avocado. Flip and turn half of omelette over into itself. Slide omelette onto warm serving platter. Garnish with cilantro or parsley. Serve with a salad of Boston lettuce, grapes, and pears topped with creamy ranch dressing.

—Ted Allen

The Chrysler Sebring Convertible

At night it turns into a planetarium.



You don't have to be Galileo to appreciate the new Chrysler Sebring Limited Convertible. As we there's as fun under blue skies as it is under spectacular constellations. But what makes it truly brilliant is that you can enjoy it year-round. Its specially lined top, for example, was designed to help keep sound out and warmth in. Plus, it offers the largest interior and trunk space of any convertible this side of the planet. For more information, call 1-800-CHRYSLER or visit www.chryslercars.com. And see why Sebring is the best-selling convertible under the sun. Or the moon.



TOP: STEPHEN MUIR FOR SEBRING; BOTTOM: GARY HALL

LEFT: LARRY SCHWARTZ; RIGHT: GARY HALL

Good to a degree of 100% satisfaction.

When in Rome, Eat

I could never, in good conscience, distance you from dining high on the perch of the elegant new dining room at the Grand Hotel. Nor would I want you to miss the exquisite, very personalized cuisine of Agnola Fattoria at Agnola Fattoria or a taste of the ancient Etruscan at Agnola Fattoria. And yes, the Ligurian cooking at the Taverna della and the Tuscan food at the Taverna. But as in most great cities, the most wonderful food is going to be the food of the local, and Rome's Roman restaurant and trattoria offer a fabulous array of typical dishes that express the robust, gaily, highly seasoned character of the city itself.

In Rome, you go to certain restaurants for certain dishes. At the appropriately named La Carbonara (Campo dei Fiori 22, 39-6-646-6743), in the city's most beautiful market place, the spaghetti alla carbonara has a black pepper bite laced by the sides.



Ortolan-style of eggs cooked by the heat of the pan, and the comfortable little trattoria antipasto table, where with sweet-sour onions, peppers, and fresh mozzarella more of which you should deprive yourself of.

Passerella (Via Zanardelli 14, 39-6-646-6743) owes its name to a signature dish: spaghetti alla Poverella. In snow-white bits of pork with fresh porcini mushrooms in cream sauce, there's a lovely salt pork anise you can sip a regular and watch the spaghetti being flung out of the Via Condotti, loaded down with American flags. At the tiny Germina alla Lupa (Via Margutta

39-6-646-6743), by the fountain, you get Roman soul food: fresh rich lasagna, a plate of pasta and potatoes, and a glass of tender tripe (served in a heavy tomato sauce). At best, the classic Roman (Viale del Corso 52, 39-6-646-6743) and the Roman (Viale del Corso 52, 39-6-646-6743), in the former Jewish ghetto, you can taste the fried artichokes "Jewish style" and the delicious and filling pasta dish.



Head over to a little trattoria (Via del Gracchi 55, 39-6-646-6743), a handsome, fashionable restaurant near the Vatican serving the best Italian food in the city. Dig into a tomato and cheese sauce, and the pork and potatoes that will make your head spin, then nibble to the bone on the succulent, bite-grilled lamb chops (called scandinavi). Burn your fingers, but if there's one restaurant that captures



the substance and spirit of Rome and the Romans, it would be the perpetually pecked La Campana (Viale della Campana 39-6-646-6743), where the pasta with chickpeas is thick and good, the spicy ragout alla puttanesca ("whore's style") feeds your blood, the chili brines with artichokes is really special, the boiled beef is a true comfort food, and the red wine is sturdy and ensures a good night's rest. It's the heaviest restaurant in Rome, and one of the best.

By the way, given the strength of the U.S. dollar, you'll be hard-pressed to spend more than \$40 per person for a huge three-course meal, including wine, tax and tip, at any of these Roman restaurants.

Caveat emptor. There's been a real slide into sloppy service and dull cooking at the celebrated Geronzi, and as much as I like the food at Al Moro—Fellini's old hangout near the Trevi Fountain, where he served mushrooms and fish—taking a dip—the complete lack of common courtesy has made going there less a pleasure and more an ordeal.

—John Markel

RULE NO. 146: THE ONLY GOOD WHITE, DREADLOCKED STREET MUSICIAN PLAYING AN EXTENDED VERSION OF "TEARS IN HEAVEN" IS A DEAD WHITE. DREADLOCKED STREET MUSICIAN PLAYING AN EXTENDED VERSION OF "TEARS IN HEAVEN" **RULE NO. 33:** YOU ARE NOT ON THE TEAM THAT PLAYS IN YOUR CITY. THEY ARE NOT "WE"; THEIR WINGS ARE NOT YOURS. **RULE NO. 34:** THERE IS NO SHAME IN GRAPE SOUP.

MAP: ADRIAN MONTAGNA; ILLUSTRATION: MARK WATSON



Eating Raoul and Bob and . . .

starts it all on the opposite thumb, it's what got us where we are today. But, based on where we are today—what with our sport-utility vehicles and our macadam walls of enclaves—is this an entirely good thing? The human infant ought to be a wee bit humbler, in some of what folk, including the wonderfully wise Gordon Graub, have ascribed. Since he writes an odd, elegant, and wily funny book, part memoir, part nature essay called *The Red Hare* (Houghton Mifflin, \$15.95), which asks us to consider the disturbing fact that human beings are still able to find a place in the middle of a predatory chain ("This means that about half of the animals on God's green earth are and will—gloriously—eat us. This means that we're not as big as we think. Once is not a scientific professional—it's clear that up right away—here's just a good writer who also happens to be an enthusiastic, bemused observer of the spectacle of life consumed itself. He is an economist who's on intimate terms with all those voracious, creepy crawlies consumes the rest of us face never to have to meet them when he was a kid. His mother taught him how to destroy a black widow's web (a long story) and his father taught him how to decimate a millipede (a garden host). Now he keeps tentacles and black widows in jars in his house. Since says animals aren't the noble savages most of those equidistant writers would like us to believe they are, *Animals Kill for Licks*, too. You'll want to keep a can of bug spray by the couch as you read this—probably not don't's intention at all, but at least you won't be left uninvited.

—Jack Heine Miller



Miles in a Box

Coke was in Miles Davis' first quintet back in the 1950s, so the second quintet had its work cut out for it if it wanted more than *Four or Five Miles*. And what a band it was, the band from '64 to '66—Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and firebrand drummer Tony Williams. Miles was driving, no question, but few band leaders have been so willing to let other players take the wheel. Listen to a 2 P.M. Miles Jammer, or any of the records up through Miles in the Day and you hear conflict, consensus, and



breakthrough playing. Shorter did a lot of the writing, but the band was as a sign of pure democracy. Andrew Sory has remastered the work of that group in Miles Davis' *The Complete Quintet Studio Recordings*, a gorgeous six-CD set that concentrates this band's burst of creativity, with the requisite alternate takes and perspective-later notes. If you profess to love jazz, purchased this. —PETER BUCH



The Shelf



They were out there, those 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s, 2020s, 2030s, 2040s, 2050s, 2060s, 2070s, 2080s, 2090s, 2100s, 2110s, 2120s, 2130s, 2140s, 2150s, 2160s, 2170s, 2180s, 2190s, 2200s, 2210s, 2220s, 2230s, 2240s, 2250s, 2260s, 2270s, 2280s, 2290s, 2300s, 2310s, 2320s, 2330s, 2340s, 2350s, 2360s, 2370s, 2380s, 2390s, 2400s, 2410s, 2420s, 2430s, 2440s, 2450s, 2460s, 2470s, 2480s, 2490s, 2500s, 2510s, 2520s, 2530s, 2540s, 2550s, 2560s, 2570s, 2580s, 2590s, 2600s, 2610s, 2620s, 2630s, 2640s, 2650s, 2660s, 2670s, 2680s, 2690s, 2700s, 2710s, 2720s, 2730s, 2740s, 2750s, 2760s, 2770s, 2780s, 2790s, 2800s, 2810s, 2820s, 2830s, 2840s, 2850s, 2860s, 2870s, 2880s, 2890s, 2900s, 2910s, 2920s, 2930s, 2940s, 2950s, 2960s, 2970s, 2980s, 2990s, 3000s, 3010s, 3020s, 3030s, 3040s, 3050s, 3060s, 3070s, 3080s, 3090s, 3100s, 3110s, 3120s, 3130s, 3140s, 3150s, 3160s, 3170s, 3180s, 3190s, 3200s, 3210s, 3220s, 3230s, 3240s, 3250s, 3260s, 3270s, 3280s, 3290s, 3300s, 3310s, 3320s, 3330s, 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The Pediatric Cancer Foundation invites Esquire readers to join its Fourth Annual Walkathon in New York on Sunday, May 17. The nonprofit foundation supports pediatric cancer research, treatment of childhood cancers and diseases, and the purchase of medical equipment. This five-mile charity walk through Manhattan's beautiful Riverside Park will end with a party at the rounds complete with live entertainment, raffles, and food. Check-in at 10:30 a.m.; the walk begins at 11:30 a.m. Entrance fee is \$10 (children under 16, \$5). To sign up, call Nancy Johnson at 914-777-5327.



Krista Usher: High Style, Down to Earth

In Peter Dinklage's landscapes, simple country folk wear extraordinary personal clothes of the period, complete with hunting poaches, modified national forest uniforms, and represents the mid-20th-century 1950 collection. Krista Usher, the latest legend in movie design, draws on this inspiration and incorporates it with a high-quality contemporary image and an emphasis on real comfort. Krista fabrics are soft and elastomeric, and are infused with colors and textures of the forest: light greens, dark blues, and purple berries. The collection will be available at The Krista Boutique, 709 Madison Avenue (Koch Street) in New York. 212-679-1211.

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An emerging genre of cheerfully subversive films finds its first near-masterpiece in *The Truman Show*

A Dark Bright Light

By David Thomson

I COULD SAY it's *Norwalk* out with *Blue Velvet* or it's a *Wonderful Life* on the brink of being insomniac's *Body Snatchers*. Those claims are more than valid; they may even be useful guides to watching this disarming, by complete *Sensory*. Let's just say that *The Truman Show* (directed by Peter Weir and written by Andrew Niccol) is one of the most startlingly original American movies in years, enough to give our faith in the industry and inspiring, nearest of the new and tomorrow. For him, out of nowhere, from the Paramount that is in league with one of our cable empires (Viscusi), comes a picture that knows there is no subject as weirdly compelling (as once as close to both farce and tragedy) as our strange relationship with television.

For Carey is Truman Burbank, a slightly goofy, Jimmy Stewart kind of guy—honest, caring, amiable, hopeful, yet shyly tuned in to some secret joke that no one else admits. Carey's wry, wistful eyes and lingering comic spirit are Truman's life force, his yearning for something more. (The project is unthinkable without Carey, yet it could have been ruined by the full exploration of the *Mad* or the *Just Men* film.)

Everyone loves him in the sunny, small town of Seahaven, where he lives on an island just off a Florida-like shore. When he leaves home for work in the morning, he high-fives guys and greetings with his next-door neighbors (who are black—this is the sly *Alamo*) and tells them not just good morning but good afternoon and good evening, too, in case he misses them later. Then it's off to work—back to tomorrow—in a building that looks out on the butter-bright town square, where the busy, cheery, are we—wait—yet? exchanges of small-town conversation make the day. Yes, this is *America*, with one difference: There's no longer any need to pursue happiness; Seahaven has a lock on it. A lock that leads the place the odd one of a happy prison.

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the screen

The light in *Sehnsucht* never falters or fluffs. The sunbathers spread like burnished discs, covering everything. The snow has an shadow—just a high, pure glow. Everything's diaphanous, and so rudely obvious that you may begin to get the dream.

All the movie trademarks wait that excessive shadow or low-key lighting is oppressive, faceboding, age-ridden.

THIS WICKED IDEA for a movie comes close to perfection by declining to notice its own gravity.

and so on. That's how you get the look of film noir, of horror movies, and of everything from *It's a Wonderful Life* to *Twist of Fate*, parities whose titles and dark imagery make you want to reach for Freud. There's an opposing principle—that high-key photography, the absence of contrast, and the reluctance of light everywhere make us feel happy and buoyant. That's the way musicals were lit, as well as a lot of romantic comedies and decades of TV sitcoms, from *Lady to Lady* to *Seinfeld*.

As the stars of bright light is increasingly one of the most common things appearing on screen. It's the light that points over product in the supermarket, that supplies the cheer of desirability in advertising. It has become the opposite of literary, as opposed to film noir. David Lynch used it in *Blue Velvet*—in the opening especially—when he wanted to show us the horrendous complacency of the little town where pretenses lead on thick to help us forget the ordinary evils in the human nature. But never has anyone done anything as complete as what Peter Weir and cinematographer Peter Biziou do with the light in *The Truman Show*.

Film noir crept up on us right after World War II, emerging from a variety of influences—in imitation of German expressionism, in the introspective spirit of psychoanalysis (which hit Hollywood in the forties), as the style of so many fans who had come out of Europe to Hollywood in the thirties and forties, in recognition of the shadow in Franz Kafka (maybe the most influential key movie made), and as a way of reflecting the terrible emptiness of human nature in the era of the war.

Film noir was not just a genre but a way of seeing that said, Sure, there's peace now, with America the most secure nation on earth in a time of boom, with a car for every house—but can you trust it? Can you trust anyone? The pessimism of the *Sinners* found its natural parallel in McCarthyism, the cold war, the H-bomb, Korea, and the steady crack-up of so many of those happy families.

Film noir originally seemed like a return to realism—the dark that really existed. But now, fifty years later, it looks mannered, and we find no real reason worthy of its tone. Every depiction of us needs to be ironic, cool, arm-tucked by conviction or belief. We have let our politics run into show business, we have aged it. And as we looked for an image that embodied our discontents, our disaffection, we found it in the high-key, undifferentiated glow of television—a look for those who have given up on the Holy Ghost of believing what they see.

Half a century after the ascendancy of film noir, a new genre may be emerging. Call it film blanc, film horreur, film fluorescent, film flash or film deadpan. I like the latter two because they convey the uttermostness of a kind of photography that borrows on with light just to get a picture. It's the kind of light that comes, like dramatic, on most TV sets and shows a rare dimensional lighting scheme without depth, shaping, or character; a flood of light that lets you sit without having to pause, a light that, with only a little background, seems normal, real, glowing and unending.

The Truman Show is looked in such light. What makes that so intriguing is the way it plays off our dependence on and looking of TV—as if TV had become the base level of visible existence. The Coen brothers have played with that kind of light, too—in *Stages* (where it can be mistaken for the waxy glow of the northern plains) and in *King of Hearts*. Such light (like the flames in "The Burning Man" and the scene "Belgian Blue Ma Ve in Rome" in the film of Fassbinder in the seven-

ties, a series of smoking high school for his concept for the advertised life. Kubrick had a hint of it in *The Shining*. Paul Schrader in *American Gothic*. And, of course, it's on TV all the time—so we can see everything.

The great coup of *The Truman Show*, the black-out, is in the conception. Seahaven is a location rather than a real place, the size of the greater TV show-

of all time, we're told, and of the low, twenty-four-hour-a-day ongoing stream of the life of Truman Burbank, today-days and coming, which means that, like a just coming up on thirty. The island has five thousand cameras on film the show, and every inhabitant is a character in the series, all the way from eternally recurring extras to the lead parts, like Truman's mom, his wife, Meryl, and his best friend. And everyone knows, except for Truman—but he's beginning to wonder. In this as a movie as light on its feet, to grapple with its look, that the top choice before we realize our own conspiracy as part of the great audience "out there."

That "there" is our "here." We are already the people who have averaged 4, 6, 8, or up hours of TV a day for years of our lives. We use TV as information in what otherwise might be our real and private lives. The audience is shown in *The Truman Show* in comic-book under-odd ladies on a sofa, gawking where they are hooked on the show but thinking they're in charge because they could always flip the channel. But the channels are all one sea. And if, nowadays, we have our meeting place that the president is just the guy on TV, why, presidents of all kinds have there—that the public, the people, the electorate, are just those silhouettes who are watching TV.

The audience in *The Truman Show* is our own look grown up—people as absolutely lip to TV because they're born on it all their lives. Their household has always had a monitor, they've seen the faces of their own delivery—just once (in gross-out)—their birthday parties, their vacations, the endless show-

rance of their existence, their on-screen. They also for granted the dead balance of the screen—not just the TV but the computer screen that has been increasingly come to dominate their education and their leisure. They are no longer used to the drop, prattle, private passion of the page, as inquiry and acting or as play upon the imagination. They are schooled in the slippery blank and the formulaic stream of television—of being on or off and preferring on. They are shy of the great economic upheaval bred by books—the thing they are, "but when it's." They'd rather watch Truman than themselves, because he's new and all his programs operate smoothly away that political, awkward, untruth, near-invisible.

The Truman Show gives away every game there is in movie-making. For Peter Weir is able to, obliged—so expose and mock the very ways he can most as well as. So we see Kneiff's (the great "director" of *The Truman Show* played with brilliantly controlled intensity by Ed Harris, one of the best actors of our

time) working on a scene, calling the shots and the camera angles, keeping up the music—with musicians sewing away in the studio beside him—such a many-almost of "magic moments" that any audience is going to feel giddy.

We know the great events of our time—JFK's young, son slaying, O. J. putting on the gloves—in bits of scenes on screen. It's as if our family history consisted of nothing but the posted scenes, the sentimental angles, the metaphors or as if we had become a culture that goes to Canyon de Chelly or Angkor Wat to learn with photographs of them. Our sense of what experience is has been organized by the underlying orthodoxy of how things are seen on film or TV.

The Truman Show is going to leave you worrying over the authenticity of every scene moment on TV. In part, that's because you'll be intrigued by Kneiff as you are shocked by Truman, by how our fantasies are so richly belated that we know how to identify with the characters and the showmen pulling

their strings. In the same way, everything seen on screen is not just an element in the story but a dream for sale. (The show pays for itself not through ads—there cannot be any interrupt—ads—but by skilful product placement. Nearly everything in it is for sale, and operates as standing by.)

The Truman Show may be the most frightening film you'll see this year. It's not violent. There's no terror. No horror, sex. No "language." And no creature more horrific than the kinds of human beings who run the show at Disney World. The Truman Show is a picture you could take the kids to more than that, you should take them. There's nothing they shouldn't see or hear—why shouldn't they face the great warping force in their upbringing? The lightness of *The Truman Show* after all, is very like the modern voice that made many regard Caliban's love as a child's book. An idealist might see the Truman Show and get some sifting of silences of placed conformity and hollow bliss that demand escape. ■

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the word

By Ron Rosenbaum

Toys Are Us

Cruelty,
madness,
masochism!
The Toy Fair
demonstrates
that we're all
but pawns
in the game.



The ant farm takes a glutinous form: Ants, of course, tunnel their way through the brown sugar.

IF THERE'S ONE THING I can say with certainty after seeing three hundred thousand toys in three days, after wandering through a million square feet of manufactured fun, after browsing through the world's largest menagerie of stuffed and stuffed, plush and squishy, puffy and floppy animals, after studying the world's largest agglomeration of mechanistically something, various on already something-gone (three-way chess, four-way chess, circular chess, cubic chess, hyperspace backgammon), after suffering through repeated pitches for casually contemporary "relevant" board games (*Chaos Manor*, the family-therapy game in which "nobody loses and every answer is right"), *Manual Pawns*, a Monopoly

warrior for the anti(k) culture, after conversing with real scientists, Gyro Gearloose, and other eccentric toy-like-sugar types, after testing out some of the newest wrinkles in primal and surreal toy archetypes like yo-yos, jet flames, and bubble blowers, the one thing I can say with any semblance of coherence is that in some very deep, profoundly seductive way toys are us.

Toys are us in that top-fashions-and-obscenities reflect not just kids' whims but adult obsessions. Toys are us because our ideas of fun tell us something about our ideas of dread—the fear of boredom and death—that our toys are supposed to distract us from. And toys are us because they've come to represent something larger than their toyness. I'm thinking of the best-

best erotic museum, one of the most profound critics of materialism, one that in a certain way sums up the entire post-nuptial competitive American sensibility. He also did with the most toy-won. Toys, in the broadest sense, are anything that distract us from the onerousness of life, anything we're all heading for. Pursuit of the most-best toys blinds us to the paralyzing superficiality of our worldly satisfaction concerns. But, yes, if toys ultimately blind us, is it okay to play with them just until we need glasses?

I tried to answer this question at the wedding, gang-bang, of commodified whipsaws that is the annual American International Toy Fair, America's mega-toy trade show, put on by the Toy Manufacturers Association—a wedding

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any of play-for-pay that spanned over two big buildings full of secretive showrooms on lower Fifth Avenue and spilled over and filled up the vast and more public Jacob K. Javits Convention Center on the Hudson River.

SECURITY IS INCREDIBLY tight in the showrooms buildings for the toy fair. This is serious business. (For one thing, no kids are allowed at the toy fair—not even “child reporters,” the press kit acerbically warns.) The fair of toy-concept showcasing, game-concept gifting, and other forms of toy espionage makes the place feel like a war zone. Spies are everywhere, reporters are suspect. Tens of millions of dollars are at stake over who gets what innovative toy concept to build or “toys ‘R” Us like; knockoffs are as feared here as in the high-fashion industry.

Consider the sugar-walled art firm *terreque*, the provocative, if elliptical, details of which were confided to me by a well-wired blond toy spy, whose identity I must otherwise conceal. She told me to check out the showrooms of a Manhattan-based company called *Sheldon Wiener Sales*, which represented a hot item at the toy fair: a remarkable new event on an old toy concept, the *art firm of the future*—designed up by toy designer George Amsman.

You know the art firm: those narrow-walled glass cases filled with sand that allowed American children of the fifties and sixties to learn the work ethic by watching worker ants tirelessly labor in their endless task of creating a maze of toy tunnels in the sand. An acceleration of pointless drudgery? Of work for the sake of work? Or, looked at in a more enlightened way, was it a celebration of the fun of watching little beings slave their lives away for your entertainment—thus a metaphor for American imperialism? The art firm at *Rosenthal, Wax & Co.* cultivating or was it savoring the virtues of cooperative selfish endeavor and the emptiness of the art form of American urban existence?

But this year, the art firm has taken a profoundly strange twist, mirroring the profoundly strange notion America has become since the fifties. This year, the thirty-one-year-old Amsman and his

toy-designer think tank, *ExploitToy*, have come up with a brilliantly imaginative, even diabolically inspired, variation on the individual, somewhat tired-out art firm theme: sugar walls.

An art firm in which the ants tunnel not through sand but through sugar? An ingenious concept, yes, the toy spy told me, but already there were rumors of a rival sugar-walled art firm being promoted by another toy designer.

I liked the busy Sheldon Wiener Sales showroom once I gained admittance to it. Among the array of offerings, I discerned a new trend in the toy business: in an age of voracious pets,



the return of live creatures—not just ants but *Beet-Monkeys*, the *flex-steed*, *swarmbees*, live *amphibians* that submerge their way through labyrinthine ecosystems.

But more than anything, I found myself transfixed by the sugar-walled art firm. There was something about the shift from the once-work ethic art firm of the past, with art designs trading through corridors of sand, to the art firm of the American nineties, in which ants, gorging themselves on sugar, fill the sweet tunnels with their fattening bodies. I had this vision of the once-laborer worker ants turning into sugar-walled art ants, organs glazing

themselves blindly, consuming sweet-assured they exist in a dubiotic coma or explode in a mist of brown sugar. A different kind of lesson for America's youth. The guy George Amsman is more than a genius of toy design. His sugar-walled art firm is a profound work of artistic art. Sugar-walled Art Firm: “R” Us.

The more time I spent at the toy fair, the more I came to admire the genius—and the genius of toy designers. They are the last embodiment of the nearly lost American tradition of eccentric inventor, the *Gyro Gearloose* (remember *Gyro Gearloose* from the *Scopely McDuck* comic?) of our era. Leaving the sugar-walled art firm behind in the Sheldon Wiener showroom, I was heading over to the Javits Center mega-exhibition when I ran into a guy who, I now look exactly like *Gyro Gearloose*. His name was Alex. He didn't want me to use his last name, he just wanted me to refer to his company moniker, *Smart Alex Toys*, and the children's book cartoon character he was peddling at the toy fair, *Marshmallow Martians*.

Marshmallow Martians are soft, puffy, smelly creatures in cheerful green wizard costumes that represent, in their nonthreatening manner, one side of the toy fair's sugar action between *Smart Alex* and *Smart Alex's* *Brainiacs*. Eventually I saw several kinds of alien puffed dolls and toys modeled on the big-headed, big-eyed creatures who kidnap humans and subject them to humiliating visual probes and other social experiments. (I'm assuming nobody's come out with a toy kit, *Johnny's First Rascal Project*, so kids could practice on one another and prepare themselves for this increasingly frequent facet of contemporary existence.)

But *Smart Alex* represented another line of thinking. He told me that “everything about *Marshmallow Martians* is designed to reassure kids that there can be friendly and to be ready to

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welcome them." He showed me one picture at a Manhattan Museum catalog look at which the family always help little Johnny and Jane (not their real names) with difficult homework assignments at school. ("I find the notion, Johnny," says one, "and these are Aunt Susie's Pictures." Judding.)

By the time I'd spent a few hours in the Juvex Center, the vast, glass-enclosed hall in which security was not as tight as in the downtown buildings, I found myself running into one toy-designer chaperon after another, many of them coming from the worlds of screen and the arts, as it turned out. Like Luca Laurenti, chief "Bubble Man" of the Tangent Toy Conspiracy, inventor of the Bubble Trumpet, which revolutionized the once-accursed bubble-blowing toy category. Bubble toys were for decades the best-selling toys in the world, Peet says, in part because of the shimmering beauty even the simplest

Mom is still a fervent believer in the *Kapone aesthetic* of "Non-Audience-Aware Aesthetic Events," as Heggness are called in ordinary jargon. And then the Bubble Man told me a secret about a Non-Audience-Aware Heggness, a secret so startling and amazing that I felt reluctant to disclose it at all, for fear of causing widespread panic in an otherwise light-hearted story about toys and sending readers running from the room, failing to finish the story. So I'll save it for the end and move on to...

The second-visit thing I saw at the toy fair was the game called *Zohanderz*. (The double exclamation mark is not there.) This is a game that conclusively demonstrates that many Americans have too much time on their hands, that many Americans have gorged themselves so greedily on the sugar walls of

of Zohanderz! Some opponents sound gross, some sound painful, and some sound embarrassing, but all are engaging and import fair conventions!

Painful, gross, embarrassing. Suddenly, I had an irrational about-guess and says, at least about once. They're not about "fun conventions," as Zohanderz claims. They're about pain. They're about self-hatred, self-loathing. I mean, what else can explain the frenzied vendors on these and checkers to many game designers spend their lives devising? Chess and checkers are games that smart people can spend a lifetime learning, playing, improving on—only to experience frustration, despair, loneliness, and defeat at the hands of someone slightly better—even teenage prodigies, who can turn your lifetime of calculating and strategizing to naught in a moment.

And yet there are game designers out there, actually here in the Juvex Center—

A WOMAN I know once confided to me that, as a kid, she and her girlfriends loved juxtaposing naked Barbies and Kens in compromising positions.

bubble glooms with and in pain because they were so cheap—just a little bit of soapy water and a cheap plastic wand.

But for many decades, bubbles were—let's face it—boring. Until the Bubble Trumpet, a face-long cornucopia-shaped horn made of plastic, which permits fluid to produce, with a few long puffs, giant bubbles, the *Myster Trunk* of bubbles—these first ones. He's not just a bubble-puff inventor; he's a bubble artist. Peet told me, and demonstrated by constructing beautiful, shimmering bubble constructions, bubbles within bubbles, bubble castles in the air that cost for a moment, then vanish with a puff of a pump. Bubble Heggness, he calls them.

His use of the word Heggness is not an accident, he told me. Before he got into designing bubble appearances (which include the Megabubble Wind, the Bubble Spider, and the Giant Myster Bubble), he studied on at the University of California at San Diego with Allan Kaprow, the artist-guy who invented Happenings at the 1950s. The Bubble

contemporary ball-musician, prosperity that they are desperately looking a way to make themselves miserable to purge their guilt over the glut.

Zohanderz's balls roll as "That Crazy World Toy Barter Game" is centered on various categories of "an enjoyment," my favorite being the *Play/Pin/Disorder* category, in which you are asked questions like "Would you rather lose the car or get looked in the back of the head?" or "get a paper cut on your eyeball?" Then there's the Food/Veggie game, in which lucky game players are asked questions like "Would you rather drink a gallon of dirty hard-water or... a shot glass of some body else's foot sweat?"

That's what the game is about: not just making choices between disgusting alternatives but, discussing them at length. Or, as the Zohanderz promotional literature puts it: "The entertaining process of making a conscious choice [such as being or not being a hot dog water or foot sweat] is the essence

it out there, the family—who spend their lives trying to make these games even harder, more complicated. That's what struck me about these four-year-olds and their choices: game concepts from DCP Games, backed by Bill Cosby, of all people! And especially their very choice, from Mega Games, Inc., which introduced a whole new realm of bitterness into the game: the prospects of parental betrayal, getting up by two against one. At least with four-year-olds, it's two parents against another two, man against man, and you know who's on your side. Three-year-olds thus promises an infinite field of external enemies.

There were some exceptions to the generally sadistic impulse beneath the game designer's mentality although they frequently fell into what might be called the mopey war category. I'm thinking of a game I came across at the toy fair called the *Maniacs* for which describes itself as a "Unique Fun Family Myster Game" that "Washes the Boring Boredom of the Old-Fashioned Bubble Game." What? I suspect this, given the choice, the

young—and the old—might opt for a neutral probe instead.

And there were the super-well-vetted *Bratty Babes*, a response to the mindless *Bratty Baby* game, a response that was almost as mindless.

"We have the only self-toy license for Albert Einstein in the world!" the Bratty Baby spokeswoman exclaimed to me as I stared at the soft, floppy inflatable version of Einstein, with wild hair and a diaper; that was the leader of the Bratty Baby line. A line of bubble-point dolls that included "Wee Wee" Shakespeare, "Boon Boon" von Beethoven, Mahatma "Mother" Gandhi, and even an infant Mother Teresa. There are a lot of hole value-added dolls and whistles with the Bratty Babes line. There's a lot to be

disturbing moments in the toy fair. My favorite conversations were with the Dream Green team of game designers: inventor Don Green and his wife, Sharon Davis, the business manager of their small West Virginia firm, which has lately begun to have a big impact with award-winning creators of new games and reinventions of ancient ones. Don Green did create one of those maddening versions of chess—his is called *Stable Cuts*, and it played who's round board on which the white pieces occupy places on the perimeter and the black pieces are gathered in a comparatively inner-circle huddle. Don Green claims it's "no more difficult than regular chess," although it sounds like crazy just having to him explain it. But he

something of an adventure in the real world as well as the mind world. He's a South African-born Brit who trained as a civil engineer; then went north to become a commercial fisherman in the waters of the Arctic, then drifted as a trophy fisher to Australia and, after getting into some trouble in Indonesia, ended up marrying a West Virginia woman who is a specialist in the history of Celtic music.

I just had the feeling, knowing I can talk about ancient games like mine-own's moods and mania, which he says may be the oldest game known to man, a game found scratched into the stones of the oldest pyramids by ancient artists, that I was listening to some spiritual-gene descendant of some great line of million-dollar game-making



You can almost hear their happy breaths. Working this Bratty Babes line. The woman, Sharon Davis, and the child, Albert Einstein.

also invented an ingeniously simplified chess-like-learning game called *The Chess*, played with just four pieces (one pawn, knight, rook, and bishop for each player) on a smaller board, which has drawn more from game-world art-lovers like Mr. Toy and is featured in *Discovery Channel* and *Score of Knowledge* read out loud.

He's also got a PC strategy game called *Paradox*, based "Addition of the Month" by *Strategic* magazine, and an array of card games, word games, mind-boggling three-dimensional mazes (like *Nature's Maze*), and beautifully hand-drawn versions of ancient games.

I found Don Green a fascinating character, not your typical ready Bratty Baby-type game inventor but

like Stan. Recall his off about how—under the influence of Happenings theorist Allan Kaprow—he came to conceive of games and says as a kind of performance art. In fact, he went beyond that, usually deciding the new level to which Kaprow has taken his *Non-Audience-Aware Events* aesthetic. According to the Bubble Man, Kaprow "is actually one of his students to attend school."

"You mean you went to medical school in Heggness, as performance art?" I asked him. "You mean the next time someone goes to a surgeon for a gallbladder operation, it might be part of a Non-Audience-Aware performance art game?"

The Bubble Man just smiled. "Toys are us, you—and now we are boys."

letter to the IRS

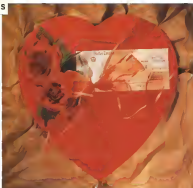
My Prickly, Presumptuous Friend

By David Eggers

I thought we had something special.
Even a kind of love.
But then you changed.

HELLO AGAIN: Things have been so weird between us for so long, and I'm at the point where I need to get some things off my chest. I'm sitting here in my bedroom, and the word inside is screaming like a half-flayed monkey. The moon is coming up huge in a way that I've seen only once before this far north, with the soothing off-whiteness and happily crackled roundness of a cornucopia waffle. I have candles lit, Justin Taylor's on the hi-fi, they're forecasting rain for tomorrow, and I'm thinking of you. Yes, again. Don't get annoyed, don't get defensive (Why are you so defensive lately? Don't say you aren't. You are.) It's just that, as you well know, this is the time of year when we've usually had our biggest problems—oh, April, you cruel, cruel month!—and it's also the month when, one year ago (if you care to remember), we last communicated.

I will have that last note you gave me. It was to care, so uncommunicative, so like you. (Really did you have to type it?) I was just sitting here reading it again, and I was actually smiling at some of your bad grammar and how you always get my address just a little wrong. It brings back so many memories good and bad. Hell, I should get to the point. I want to clear things up. I want there to be understanding be-



twen or so. And no matter what you think in that fuzzy little head of yours, there has not, honestly, been understanding between us. Not any. Ever. Sure, we talked, we wrote, we sent each other gifts, but did either one of us really know why? No. No way. First it—we were just going through the motions.

And that's part of the reason I haven't cashed that last check you sent.

To be honest, I didn't understand it. A check for \$100,000? What were you trying? What did it mean? You didn't have to give me that money. I certainly didn't deserve it, but you just went ahead and did it with no explanation. One day, it opened the mailbox, and there it was, an that immediately plain sort of envelope you've always favored. Yes, I appreciated it. I really did. I was flattered

ALAN WEISS

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letter to the IRS

by the thought, baffled by your generosity actually. But I didn't cash it.

Because, sir, we had an agreement. An agreement that I didn't see ever explicitly spelled out—or at least never in a manner that a slow-witted guy like me had any chance of grasping—but an agreement that I had never the less come to accept in my own simple way. The agreement was something like this: Once a year, in April, I would fill out some papers, make a few calculations, sign deeply, perhaps weep a little in that

every so often to prove to myself that what we had was real.

But then, one day not too long ago, I realized it was cheating. It was a ruse. The whole thing. A ruse of a share of a decade of an illusion. Or worse. Because this year, for the first time in my life, I found myself in a real job, one that paid, on a yearly basis, more than it costs to buy a suit, mortgage, one-way riding lawn mower. And this real job is also one of those

I ask, "How much is a main bagel?" Again, the clerk asks me, "Well, how much do you have?"

I say, "Twenty dollars." And this time, he says, "Then the price of the main bagel is some dollars." Strange, I've got the same bagel, but because I have some money in my pocket and the clerk knows about it, I pay exponentially more. Why do I pay different prices for the same main bagel (baked, with butter)? I've been checking around, and I'm

I DIDN'T deserve that check you sent me, but I've kept it in a safe place and looked upon it every so often to prove to myself that what we had was real.

way I sleep—silently, with my shoulders—and I send you a check representing a certain percentage of the money I had earned during the year (I realize that some people let you take money from them every two weeks or so, but it was never like that with us. We were different. There was, however, as I first understood, a lot more in

It means, I expected certain things from you. I wanted protection from creditors abroad and from a recent dear I wanted attorneys and lawyers and more expensive and a postal answer and the pleasure of getting crap, newly minted currency every an often, even if the new hundreds look so gaudy and kopaded (so ugly Euro-people) But the point is that, yes, I wanted a lot from you. I sent you my money, and I expected a lot.

And I must admit that you delivered, but I realize I got the original and original money, not to mention the comfort of federally insured banks, the promise (in a promise) of security in my old age, and the perpetual joy of ever-changing postage stamps featuring dead people and world leaders. Rest of all, I did it all for all those things in a bargain-basement price. Because I had never earned all that much money, my contribution seemed, if not negligible, to my mind at least fair. I was a satisfied customer, and I didn't feel I deserved a refund. So I've kept that check you sent me almost a year ago now. I've kept it in a safe place and looked upon it

job in which they allow you—yes, my presumptions friend—to just go ahead and take, without you and me even briefly talking about it beforehand, a chunk of my money. That was annoying, yes, but it wasn't just the not-taking part that got to me. It was the size of the taken-without-asking chunk that was so confusing. The checks, at I saw them isolated on my pay stub, first made me laugh, then made me angry then angry, then ok, hell, the whole range of emotions in any good David Schweitzer film. But when I gathered my senses again, I was left with not only a tremendous debt blow-out but also the clear and discomforting realization that there was simply no understanding between us.

I didn't get it. First I was, quite accustomed to paying my dues, to giving you a certain sum for certain services and privileges. Then, suddenly in my wallet rose, you wanted more from me, even though—and this is the key thing here—I wasn't giving anything we wanted. As the funny man on TV says: What's up with that? It was weird. Why? Well, he said I was stupid. I'm hungry and I walk into a bagel shop. I ask the clerk, "How much is a main bagel?" And the clerk asks me, "Well, how much do you have on you?" I say, "One dollar."

He says, "Then the price of the main bagel is twenty cents." Hummm... curious. The next day, I go to again

rest the only one who's had trouble understanding you. Your decisions are legion. (I know that at this righteously you, but remember, I'm telling you this because I think you should know.) Now, much of their griping has to do with how complicated you must be making what should be a relatively simple transaction. You've been told before, you're born one, about the terrible byzantine way you must be thinking about things. Others complain about your "progressive" ideas. These sounders want a flat tax, a much more—any alternate plan, as long as it fits on a postcard and rhymes.

But my problem with you was even more basic than the complaints about all your loopholes and complexities. My problem was that once I had paid for roughly my share of services, or even well over what is roughly my share, why was it, dear friend, that I continued to owe you more? I expected of some sort of clarity or surprise. I wanted no questions, no pay—I wanted a fixed sticker price. (Think about it—it worked for those plucky innovators at Saturn.) And I wondered, Why are those who are upset by the progressiveness of your ways not worried about the inherent strangeness of the entire percentage-of-income notion? While most tax reformers hope to trim their dues by replacing a progressive tax with a flat tax, I was interested in reducing your take to not just a flat percentage but a flat number.

Thank! Sure, this number could be progressive to a point, but this number, I was thinking, would not exceed, say twice what that poor's share of the services would cost. Maximum total for anyone! Let's say twenty. People making below? They pay maybe seven. If they make \$25,000, they pay about \$20,000. \$20,000/\$25,000. Millionaire Jimmy Buffet? \$25,000 Billionaire Warren Buffett? \$25,000. Yes, the rich would get richer, but the poor wouldn't, uh, get poorer, and all we'd have to do is even a few hundred billion from the budget to accommodate the change in revenue. A new era would dawn! Everyone would love you! I was flushed with excitement. For you! For me!

But then came this one night—the night that changed everything. It was kind of like tonight, when the wind was whistling its strange and terrible song. I had fallen asleep while watching Tim on TNT, and as the credits were rolling, I woke with a start. Right then, it all came to me. It all made sense. Oh, rather, it made no sense at all. No sense no sense. But that is the key to your ineffable beauty. Oh, yes, you're beautiful, I suddenly so suddenly beautiful, and your beauty had something to say! That's when I realized I loved you.

Sure, for so long I thought you were cold and calculating and distant, but I couldn't have been more wrong. I was wrong about you, about your ways, your motives, your flesh and

could not! I was paying the highway toll for the guy in the car behind me! It was sort of wonderful, something out of a Robert Fulbright book. From the wallet budget, take my money, I'll give as much as I can! Perfectly logical, eh? (Logically beautiful!) It was all so clear. You can't. So sorry case!

And I suddenly felt a deeper compassion for our weakness. Think of it. We stuff when we hear that someone like Diana Moore is making (or maybe I should say was making) as much as a movie. Five, but this woman, even with a half dozen tax shelters and investments in cash-hedging—ing these investments, is still paying taxes in the low millions. And that fact—that while someone like me might pay taxes in the five figures, this woman, who earned (define it as you like) her money fast and square, pays perhaps a hundred times more—that's as stunning as her star turn (lose, let's remember) in *Cosmo* as *One Crazy Summer* (2001). Diana Moore's serverable acting and the way she looks in a snag, what time you are paying for one school in Rhode Island cannot countering in Kansas, gone in Guam, and a thousand other things, and it's all happening without her thought or active assistance.

You old sorry! I don't care if you can't account for a billion a year that you either lose or miscalculate, I don't care about how cruel you can seem—how disagreeable and costly and cold.

I'M SORRY to be blunt, but there are millions who think you're a few planks short of a raft.

drama. It was I who had been cold and calculating. I was trying to apply the most facile sort of math to our relationship—I pay this. I get that. But my friends were right. You're so much more complicated than that. I remember the words displayed outside your D.C. building: "Taxes are what we pay for a civilized society," and they suddenly rang in my thick skull like cheerful bells. You have, at your core, the most softly romantic of souls! I paid more because others

bloody. Yes, I was ambivalent for so long. And to tell you the truth, in my darker moments, I thought that maybe you were a lying, cheating, two-faced scoundrel. But I now know you for what you are: a hopeless romantic, a chastened-headed Fodor's Mood, the endless togetherness goodness of a civilized society. Oh, honey. I'm so sorry I misjudged you.

Now, um, can I still cash that check? Six hundred and eighty bucks. I could really use this damn new M

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Tanqueray Tom Collins

- 1 to 2 oz. Tanqueray Gin
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- Juice of 1/2 lime
- 1 tsp. Simple Syrup (powdered sugar and water)
- Ice, club soda
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Do drink responsibly, won't you?

the lives of men

Straight Up the Face

By Scott Carrier

A backcountry skier hikes up into the windblown peaks of the Wasatch Mountains, where the untracked powder is silent and graceful and pure. Then the trouble begins.

Descent was dry every day, and every night it was windy—sunny to severity in the on-hour gusts just whipping the peaks by narrow passes coming off Thunder Ridge and the Twins at sunrise. The snow on the ground—maybe four feet that fell over Thanksgiving—had turned into an ugly thing of two layers: the top being wind-compacted and hard, so hard in some places that you could stand on it and pump up and down, and so weak in others that you'd break through in your turns and drop through two feet of depth here, all the way down to the cold, hard ground.

The first week of the month, I went up into Red Pine to the Pitzforks. I stood on the ridge, looking down the main chute into Mayfield, wondering if I should ski it. It was so steep, like a spiral vortex one thousand feet long, down through the cliff band and out onto the open cirque below. If the slope were visible on me, I'd be carried off to the cirque and buried there with the boulders, in a field of white grass.

The mountain was on my left shoulder, the line of the Pitzforks. The Salt Lake Valley was at the mouth of my arm, the lake itself within a span of my hat. I could see mountain ranges



in Nevada and Idaho and mountain ranges to the east and south that drain into the Green and the Colorado rivers. I could see the world, my world—our one so large, so beautiful, piece of it.

The snow in the chute would be hard and icy for the first three turns, and then it would soften up, but it would not be good powder, it would not be dreamy at all. I thought about going back, sking down the safe way I'd come up, but it

was as if the chute was the whole thing, the circle that needed to be closed, and I jumped into it and stood it as straight down as possible.

It was good for a thousand feet, the surface strong enough to hold my turns, but below ten thousand feet, the snow turned mean and corrupt, and I was generally beaten up and given over to weeping on the knoll before I finally reached the river, which I crossed

SHANE HILLMAN



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with my dad still on my feet, so tired and out of patience. I'd made the same one or twice in your first year for sure (that's a decade, and I'd never felt so weak-kneed and decrepit). I wanted to blame it on the loose snowpack, but the truth was that I was getting old.

The second week of the month I called my friend George Sommer to see if he wanted to go skiing. It hadn't

BY GOING into the backcountry, we had learned about God and nature and the very mountain itself, because the mountain, suddenly, could kill us.

snowed since my last trip to Red Pine, so the conditions were still pretty bad, but I figured he'd want to get out for the exercise. He's seventy-nine years old. I called, and his wife, Sherry, answered the phone, which was strange because Gary had never once in the many years I'd been calling ever answered the phone.

"George's at the doctor, and he's going to be going to the doctor from now on," she said. "I'll have him call you."

He called later that night and was upset and said he couldn't go, that he couldn't do it anymore. "You have to be flexible, and my back..." He said, or tried to say, that he was sick and had to go to the hospital for six days or just one day, he didn't know, or he didn't want to say.

I said, "It's very serious if you have to go to the hospital. George, what is it—what's wrong?" But he didn't answer, and there was a long dead space on the phone, as if I should know already—he's seventy-nine, what else is there to say? Finally, he whispered, "The doctors. The goddamned doctors." He was telling me it was over, this time for sure.

It wasn't as though I hadn't seen a coming. I first met George when he was sixty-five. We were at a party, and I remember him telling me that his doctor had advised him to "quit skiing and accept the fact that, over the age of sixty, a man loses 10 percent of his strength every year, no matter what." I asked him if he was going to quit, and he looked at me as if I must be some kind of fool. The first time I ever went

anywhere with him was on a hike, and he had a butcher's knife in the backseat of his car that he used to weigh out twenty-five to thirty pounds of where granite, which he would put into his backpack to make up for lost weight, was accumulating along the way.

George was strong then. As strong or stronger than I was, at less than half his age. Working up, breaking trail, and skiing down, he was an obvious asset.

tes, showing no sign of fear or hesitation. I was, we all were, in awe of him. He didn't really start losing his strength in a noticeable way until he crashed his bike while pedaling hard down City Creek the summer he was seventy. His way to think about how fast he was going when he fell. He ended up with a concussion, and his right eyeball started floating around in the socket, and he eventually had to have it sewn in place. He and he could still see out of it, but I don't think he could.

I thought the crash might slow him down, that maybe it would be the beginning of the end for him, but that didn't happen. It just made him try to go stronger. Sometimes he'd whisper about his prostate or even wear a belt about not being strong enough to break trail, and I'd think, *Wow, he's going downhill, but then he'd always come back and amaze me by climbing those tall mountains in a week or by going skiing in total whitout snowmelt.* "Just for the exercise," he was hard for me to believe that it was really of over now, that George would never go skiing again. I hoped he was just gone out of shape by the doctors telling him he was sick.

The second week of the month, I got a letter in the mail from the U.S. Forest Service announcing what it called an "experiment" to be conducted this winter in the central Wasatch Mountains. I read the letter and called George, knowing he'd be very interested in it, but he wasn't home or he

wasn't answering his phone.

Next night, there had been a small-scale battle going on between backcountry skiers and Wasatch Powder-bird Guides, a company that has wealthy clients to the tops of the high peaks and ridges in backcountry. You can imagine what it's like to spend four or five hours walking four thousand vertical feet up a mountain in complete solitude and silence, looking down on

long, untraced slopes of deep powder, only to have a helicopter suddenly appear and drop off on or right toward you, then to stop and cut up the whole slope again in front of you. It's like something from out of the apocalypse, and it's happened to me more than once. It's happened to a lot of people more than once.

According to the Forest Service, "The compromise has become very heated and has elevated to 'frightening levels of intransigence and harassment.'" There had been reported incidents of backcountry skiers physically occupying helicopter landing sites, incidents of verbal abuse. There was concern that someone would be seriously hurt, and so the basic idea of the experiment was to separate the two parties: have the helicopters go to one area, the backcountry skiers to another. The letter included a schedule listing the specific areas that the two parties should avoid as in order to provide solitude.

The letter, of course, was written with a tone of fairness and balance: "There are plenty of mountains out there, so we need to fight our way out—or buy it—was this same sense of fairness and balance that put the American Indians on reservations." By taking backcountry skiers to stay out of certain areas of public land, the Forest Service was giving the helicopters the right to an untraced slope. The "experiment," I knew, was mainly the beginning of a paper trail that would eventually lead to an official policy: it was a way to

start up and sell something that was never owned to begin with.

I called George several times over Christmas and New Year's, but he wouldn't answer his phone. I thought that if I could just get a hold of him and tell him about the Forest Service plan, he'd be really mad—maybe mad enough to go skiing with me up into the areas we were being "advised" to avoid. But apparently he didn't want to talk to anybody.

The first day of the experiment was January 4. A Sunday, and the Forest Service had set aside White Pine Canyon for the helicopters. I left the house at 5:00 A.M. and drove up Little Cottonwood Canyon and parked in the lot by the side of the road and started skiing up in the dark, hoping to be high in the cirque when they bombed the slope at dawn. They call it avalanche control, as if that were possible.

Hiking up, I was angry, and it was the only time I've ever been angry when skiing. I felt like I was losing something I loved and that I had little or no power to keep from being cut.

I grew up skiing. I grew up with a grandma that grew up skiing—our fathers were all successful businessmen and lawyers and doctors in Salt Lake City. They paid for our equipment and passes, they loaned us their cars to drive around out of our smocks, through well-stocked stores in Sun Valley and Jackson Hole and Aspen, they came to the principal's office when we were expelled from school for skipping around or going to class and they provided a bumper crop of skiers who, when we were out of high school and starting to make our way in life, decided it would be better to keep the career and work on our skiing some more.

This was back in the mid-seventies, when downhill skiing was becoming as popular so quickly that a lot of us started cross-country skiing as well to avoid the crowded resorts. Cross-country skis, at that time, were skinny and light, made for going straight on a flat surface, and the boots were designed not at all what you would want for making hard turns on a steep slope—but with practice, and after many

easy crashes, you could learn to balance and ride them in the powder hills on high, snowy ridges—lots of big gaps and narrow and bumpy, and men showing hard gradients in four months of lightning, one out of three men in George's division was either wounded or killed.

George almost never talks about the war (the only thing I remember him saying is that he "did nothing" in it), but I think it left him still shocked and scared forever of human beings. When the war was over, George moved to Salt Lake City, no doubt because the Wasatch Mountains, in 1945, were virtually unexplored and there was less like

ghosts—pure and silent, capable of causing nightmares and giving you another chance.



philosophers by the white granite. Our most honest method of inquiry was to go in high up and so far back as possible, hoping to get lost and scared and truly humbled and silent, the trying to make it back. And that's when we met George, because he was already there, ahead of us.

George Sommer was born in Cachevala in 1910 and trained to ski in the Alps. When he was seventeen, he saw Hitler parade through Prague. The Nazis took his father's cattle factories and George came to New York City with his mother and sister, then, in 1936, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, ending up in the 10th Mountain Division, the elite ski troops, and was sent to fight in the mountains of northern Italy. I've seen documentary footage of the backcountry George was in,

and they were all fierce hand-to-hand and running up steep, rocky hills on high, snowy ridges—lots of big gaps and narrow and bumpy, and men showing hard gradients in four months of lightning, one out of three men in George's division was either wounded or killed.

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ghosts—pure and silent, capable of causing nightmares and giving you another chance.

George was of the first generation of skiers in the Wasatch, and I was of the second. Heading up into White Pine that Sunday morning, I was angry because the third generation, my kids, would not be moved to be moved by these mountains. As young men in the last centuries, we'd looked at the world

around us and seen nothing, or very little, to respect or admire or build our lives upon, but the Wasatch were wild and mysterious and seemed unapproachable to the ends of civilization.

We were wrong. Growth was inevitable. Since the 1920s, the number of skiers in the Wasatch has increased by 90 percent, and the trend shows no sign of abating. In the eagles, we would worry about someone breaking trail before us, now we worry about finding a parking spot at the mouth. The canyon have helicopters and condominiums and scenic lines of bumper-to-bumper traffic, and it's not the same, and it's never going to be the same. The wilderness will be gone.

In THE PARK, walking up White Pine Canyon, I had a plan, and I was going

the lives of men

to stick to my plan, regardless of what might happen. I was going to hike up Red Baldy, make a track of zigzags right up the face, and then ski back down, carving many wide turns in the powder, effectively ridding the entire slope of the day's heli-skiers' skins. And then, at the bottom of the slope, I was going to wait for them and sit in big lumps with my skis in the snow. I wanted to do this for George. I thought so I could tell him about it and hear him laugh and get upset about the helicopters. He'd be used to

Waking up, I saw that the sky was partly cloudy, warm and sunny, like it is between storms. Sometime in the night, a cloud had blown over from the south and left an inch of new snow on top, thousand feet, three inches at one thousand feet, and six inches at ten thousand feet. Above ten thousand, the trees stopped and the cirque opened up and everything was blowing in a local storm. I could see the top of Red Baldy another thousand feet above, and it was obvious that no helicopter could land there or anywhere near there. It was too windy. Still, I decided to go on to the top of the mountain and let my route take me as close to the original plan of going straight up the face.

I started the snow-puck with my ski

. This snow on the ground, the snow I was walking on, was very hard, too hard to get a pole through, so there was no way I was going to be leaving any tracks that could be seen, and the wind was so strong that even if I were to find some powder, my tracks would be blown over and covered up in a few minutes anyway. Still, I approached the mountain directly and started up the face. As it got steeper and steeper, I started to worry about the snow above me; if it was hard and wind-blown, like the snow I was walking on, it would be safe, but there was a chance, a good chance, that higher up, there would be wind-deposited snow blown over from the other side, big drifts accumulating up high in the chute.

There was a ridgepole about a hundred yards to my left, and I started to traverse over to it, as it would be a much safer approach. I created a series of narrow and steep avalanche chutes, and they were all hard and solid, no problem, but the last chute before the ridge was full of drifted snow. I took one step into it and thought, *This is not good.* Then I took another step and the whole chute fractured like a pane of glass and I fell headfirst into it. They say you should never fight

the slide go by me. I stood there with my hands on my knees and coughed up the snow in my lungs, my whole chest exploding with adrenaline, in three or four huffs that were actually a pronounced sneeze. I was afraid that had I been buried, everything would have been snowed over in a matter of hours, and my body would not have been found until spring. I stumbled up and down the slide path, looking for my other ski, feeling very much as though I were in one of those *Twilight Zones* in which the guy is really dead, only he doesn't know it. The wind was furious, and it may have been snowing or it may have been that the air was full of snow, and the feeling was that I was again being buried in a, only snow slowly.

I calmed down a bit and found my ski and thought about continuing to the top, because, after all, that had been my plan, and I still wanted to make my important point. But then, luckily, I realized that I had already made an important point, which was that I was a suicidal maniac who should immediately get down off the mountain and not come back until I learned how to behave on it. Sliding down, I was off balance and fell and reentered my head into a big

I TOOK one step into the chute and thought, *This is not good.* Another step and the whole chute fractured like a pane of glass and I fell headfirst with it.

pole by running it all the way to the ground and feeling for layers and differences in texture. If you were to get really scientific about it, you can dig a snow pit and get down on it and look at the layers up close, but I just used my ski pole, a technique I learned from George. Snow in the air is like new love. George is fond of saying, while snow on the ground is like a marriage. With wind and changes in temperature and humidity, the layers either grow more and more alike, so you can't even tell them apart, or they become different and eventually break apart and separate. By jangling your pole down as far as it will go, you can feel how the layers are getting along.

like easy to stay on top and I tried, but there was nothing to swim or fight against as I and all the snow around me were pretty much free-falling through the air. There was nothing to breathe but snow, and it packed down onto my chest, and I was having to breathe through it, and a woman's work, and I was falling faster, and the snow was pushing me down, down underneath it, and it was getting darker and I thought, *How long do I take to suffocate? How do I feel the when I die?*

Somewhere after falling maybe three hundred feet down the slope, I was able to somewhat over and get my one remaining ski underneath my body and stand on it and hold a line and let

boulder of white granite just under the snow. Then, I hurt. Driving down the canyon and back onto the valley, I was still kind of shaky and scared, but I realized that my vision was very sharp—the air was especially clear, the colors of the clouds and the sky and the city were incredibly vibrant. I stopped to get some coffee at the 7-Eleven and watched the traffic go by on Westch Boulevard, and even the cars were clean and shiny and beautiful. I was shocked, but I was still alive, and I knew there'd be another day, another test with the helicopters, and I decided to go home and call George and work on a better plan for flying them in.

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players, two for *Alie*—coach, promoter, number one and only substitute off the bench. As you're no doubt aware, the team achieved phenomenal international success. Other businessmen tried to imitate the Twitter formula and launched basketballing basketball squads. Traveling professional teams with names like *Badges of ethnic pride*, *Coffees*, *Germans*, *Swedes* formed into leagues or appeared in some intriguing towns, leagues that wound and wound until the NBA, noting the sales of the *American Basketball League*, developed its master plan of hype and marketing, pumping up the volume, piling up profits through commodifying the basketball skills of large black men, achieving a level of success Coach Superson never dreamed of.

WHEN HE CALLED TO SAY HE'D WALK to the restaurant to meet me, I wondered if a star of Denzel's magnitude could appear on the street and not be accosted by fans. I should have known the answer: For Denzel Washington, appearance is often disguise enough. If you're a sturdy built, youngish (forty-three), athletic-looking black guy on an urban street at night, people, especially white people, tend to pretend you're not there. The publicity even if he on the don't wish Denzel away, won't hardly be getting up in his face to shove him. *Movie star-women* it's Stewart L. Jackson playing his latest, *Alie*, aware, vicious, non-remitted hoodlum—the last thing on the poster's mind as he negotiates that archetypal urban minefield, the maelstrom of black menace and white vulnerability all the Denzel Washingtons in the world can't react out.

An old story: Growing up black in Ansonia, Denzel Washington got plenty of practice perfecting the art of invisibility, that peculiar state of being there and not being there, with its perks and punishments. Usually a perverse mix of both, for African Americans willing to play the rules race system. Why pretend the original script of race, where the mayor's headed, who's going to win or lose in the end, if there is an end, are issues most players, black or white, don't concern themselves with. Day by day, we go along to get along. We need work, any kind of work, and take it where we can get it. But is it different for a star? Do superstars transcend race, are they truly colorless? Or is a starring role just one more arbitrary emptying into the running river of the race script that comes at all along their existence, a flood washing away the ground the country stands on?

Go along to get along. Wisdom as ancient as power or Can-Dispute how quiet, conservative, wiggly nose, *Insidious*. Through the rules he plays especially the role of Hollywood superstar, how much sport has Denzel Washington missed? What's he doing with it?

DENZEL'S BILLED CAP IS PUSHED back from his forehead now. On cue, some young ladies at the bar send the waiter over with an offer to buy Mr. Washington a drink. A waitress later, a pretty girl dawdles at his table, checks flushed, just on the edge of going to pay her respects.

You can't take your eyes off Denzel. The man deserves attention. Gaspes it won't let go. Makes you feel almost guilty when your gaze strays from him for, his mobile hands.

Before the tape starts rolling, I ask him what he thought of *Hi-Gate*, in which he portrays a man incarcerated for killing his wife, and in which his character becomes an exploration of a father's obligations to his children. He's fresh from his first viewing of the nearly finished movie, so he's reluctant to say very much. Loyalty to Spike causes him to hesitate, not party-line gurns black-black loyalty that annoys critics but the decent urge to speak first to his colleague, collaborator, and friend, the person with the greatest stake in *Hi-Gate*.

As a matter of fact, Denzel looks off with the back screen. In listening, interesting, but not long. Quickly he adds, I was wary a lot. It got to me. A strong movie. I was moved, surprised more than once.

He asks about a few actors he remembered shooting with

were missing in the version he'd just seen. Where they in the cut (I'd screened a couple weeks before)?

You never know he says. Watch your front off, think you're going great, and then you see the final cut and your scene didn't make it.

Probably why I'm ready to turn to directing, he says. Acting is like someone telling you for years to write the character, but they never let you. They give you the outline of their story and my flow when I read from you, John, it is. Or as you can now, it's just one character, the main character, they want you to write the main character and when you finish it, give it to them and they'll use it as they see fit. They're not out to manipulate you, necessarily. They want to use the best of what you give them.

You're played many different roles, many different kinds of men, but three character types out there, who being connected as you are to movie after Hollywood movie. A character named Denzel Washington. Did you have to learn to play him?

The celebrity. Did a character you were as old as I am. To be honest with you, I think a career who play more in interviews. Or is someone like putting my handprints in the sidewalk outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre, those public moments.

When I'm coaching kids, no. When I'm in the office, no. When I'm at home, no. When I'm going to the movies and somebody recognizes me, not really. I just say, How ya doing. The celebrity person is relevant to interviews, cause then I can combat a deficit in. The same way I work with my kids to help them feel their dad's just their daddy who has a different kind of job.

I deconstruct the image. When someone goes, We're this and you're that, I say, Bad what? When I get all these scenarios, bad and role model and voice of the black people questions, all that kind of stuff, I back off. Stay that's not me. It's not who I am.

You don't feel the pressure of other people's expectations. Like, where? Like, where? As a Little League coach? My daughter's happy because of the reason I wanted to do *Hi-Gate* is because in *Hi-Gate* it was to go against the tide. Yeah, the image stuff can affect you in the way you're trying to fight it. People saying you always play the good guy, the most guy, whatever. I'm like, screw it. I didn't make it.

You know, I didn't go into movie to become famous. I never thought about being a movie star, ever, ever in my life, ever. Even once I started getting roles. I figured I was gonna work in the theater, and if I ever got in movies, it would be movies like *Tim Burton*. I didn't look at guys like *De Niro* as movie stars. I looked at them as great actors in movies. I wasn't into movies at all. As a teenager, I saw *Shogun* and *Whomot*, but I didn't think I want to be the actor playing *Shogun*. That maybe. Not the actor.

The other piece to this is that there weren't a lot of movies where we could see ourselves. Back when I started going there was maybe *Ronney*, maybe *Clayton*, maybe *Ray*. I wanted to play *Shogun*, play the great classic roles. The black characters, what I wanted, it was more real. That I seen we were racist. I signed with the Williams Morris Agency before I graduated from college. My choice was to go to study at the American Conservatory Theatre, not only in New York and start working or go to Hollywood. I never thought about going to L.A.

So you wanted to be Laurence Olivier. Yeah, I guess so. I wanted to be Henry VIII in *T.S. Eliot*. Right? Right, right, exactly. There were the models in their likeness, so that's what I wanted to be big as the King.

IN HE GOT GAME, one of the screen's first official Washington movie came at night on a Coney Island outdoor basketball court. A father coaching son, Spike Shattlesworth on one, one against Jesus, his twelve-year-old son. It came into a raw, brutal encounter. Spike, worried up inside with anger and frustration over his own failure to make the big time, is determined to mold in his son an unshakable core of toughness and resolve, as the ground, in Jesus, this now prodigiously talented version of his flesh. Spike won't let go. The coaching, the good intentions, unravel, the game turns ugly, as excuse for physical and verbal battering, Spike beating himself up in the person of his son. Then the worse hidden on the dark margins of the court angers Spike to lurch up, yell out. Why just time for a daybreak. You root for young Jesus. With he was a damn year older a hundred pounds heavier, so he could whip his former self, as Daddy or not.

Jesus could the game by leaving the ball over the fence into the black, black night surrounding the court. The scene's over, but Spike can't let it go. Annals his son again at the dinner table, and the result is the accidental death of his wife when she tries to intervene, a terrible accident that sends Spike to prison and orphan his children. Denzel says the father-son scene on the court was difficult to watch.

I coach kids, he says. I work them real hard. I'm a good negotiator. A multi-task kind of guy. Get the kids ready to go. Send them out there and we just wear the other team out. Then them to death. We better. When faster. We know what to do. That's our rule. Let's go get 'em. I teach them they own the fourth quarter. Our time. Cause we're worked harder. We're in better shape. Something I learned from P.J. Carlesimo at Fordham. Owning the fourth quarter. He'd run so old one tonight hanging out. He was tough. That we believed we could go out and own the fourth quarter. Tables set to how my kids going around punching up each other. We got 'em. Got 'em. We own the fourth quarter. Run those champs out of here.

On the other hand, I've seen some parents who go way too far. I've seen coaches mean to their kids, brooding them down. Some people might say maybe that's not a bad thing. To them maybe even the scene of Spike coaching Jesus is not a bad thing. He's playing with his kid, a one-on-one game. So what, he's pushing him and knocking him down. Maybe it's just what Jesus needs.

On doing in the suburbs Atlanta in the hood, made it a movie rule, one line to bring the bad news? Spike up to his chin to yell, screw it, tough world. No you mean. No, I'll be. No, I'll be. To what does Jesus owe, his success? Who is his mother? What is Spike killing his mother and Jesus having to make it on his own?

Explosion. Something bad had to happen. Spike was definitely living through his son. There's a conflict going on that's not a real one, and they all get a reason, an excuse. It's mostly about Spike's



and *Alie* Superson when he died was quite a rich man. Superson is not included in the chorus of famous coaches—Dean Smith of North Carolina, John Thompson of Georgetown, among others—who appear and speak in Spike. *Alie*'s new movie, *Hi-Gate*, playing themselves, testifying to the phenomenal skills of a fictional high school hoagies: Jesus Shattlesworth, whose father, Jesus, is played by Denzel Washington. P.J. Carlesimo, victim of a disputed assault perpetrated upon him by one of his players, Latrell Sprewell, as NBA All-Star, doesn't get a speaking role in Spike. *Alie*'s movie, either Jesus thought he was Denzel's freshman basketball coach at Fordham, in the miserable presence of P.J. and *Alie* informs the film and the narrative. Both coaches deserve at least honorable mention for making their mark on the game, for giving us something to ponder on our way to *Hi-Gate* and its leading man.

frustration. In a way he also saw this led to his final end: "You know, he wanted to get paid, to get out of the projects."

The whole thing was headed in a bad direction. Then, boom, here something bad does happen, totally unexpected. I don't think Jake was a wife beater. They had their bad days, sure, but, man, suddenly she's dead. He killed her. Spikes is a sure sign you're off. And it's something different for me. Looking rough, being a son.

Jake had to get tougher and tougher to survive in prison. He had to grow up. And still he's a long way to go. I came out the jail and the first thing I do is buy some sneakers. Shows on, old leg wrapped up in Ace bandages, trying to pick up where I left off. Who's the kid and who's the adult? Jesus says no to ten thousand dollars his high school coach offers. He's the tough one.

What made Jesus a son?

I remember my kids' grandmother, Paula's mother, the witch that appeared in our house when she was around. As parents, we'd have "discussions" with the kids. When Grand-mom would, that switch would be over by the window, and she'd tell the kids she's going to rub it on their legs. That was enough someone to scold them out. Just scold them with it. Just smack the children with a switch. Being on

near the house and my father told us to stop and went to work, and we started up again and broke a window. Everybody suddenly had something to go. All my friends gone, and I got eight hours to think about my fate.

WHAT A COUNTRY Real Jesus Shuttlesworth still in high school wearing multicolor-influenced NBA jerseys. Glasses, wearing the uniforms of Hewitt or Bulls, riding into town, itching for a fight. Archetypal American road warrior with enormous guns but curled up in blackface, a few guys with beeper on necklaces, forbidden, seductive. Black bodies on display for a night of G and R. Indians posing in cowboys and they get paid as much as the locals. Black over white in a country historically fiercely dedicated to just the opposite proposition. Michael Jordan is an ad, wearing at two white girls who sit on a park bench checking him out, watching every the emperor's trousers, speedwalking about as the style of basketballers in the build, black prince, black art, arena, men by '85 is still underway, if a sells tickets, doesn't no rule that can't be broken, no stereotype not turned upside down, pulled apart, and put back in place. No category—religion, Indian, mother (Jenna on son, Reggie White)—was subject to the exposure of advertising's pop pornography. As long as it sells. Free to all, as long as it sells.



the road and coming home and trying to catch up for all that time away. Found myself being too nice. Gently about being gone, and I let the kids go away with murder.

In response, the director said: Black? You're going to be

Rage. Wasn't just your father—that was one of the ways we develop our imaginations imagining how he was going to kill us when he got home, and the longer the amount of time, the better the imagination was. I remember we were playing ball

I love the game of basketball. Played it forty-one years, from grade school through summers after college, long past the time the game should have passed me by. But I wouldn't let it. I loved it too much. Play it still when I watch my son, Dita, follow my daughter Jenna's career with the L. A. Sparks of the WNBA. Love the game. My heart hurt more than my neck when punched served at the top of my age forced me to stop running full court last year. Anything I write about hoop auto-

matically tends toward prose song. Words want to drizzle, fast-break, crosswords, throw no look passes. Shattered hole words, words dancing to beat music in time to the bouncing ball, words designed by spirit of ancestor movement, ancestor talk. I hardly don't want to pen an elegy.

But there's P. J. and Latrell to deal with. Smoldering anarchy exploded when authority and race got entangled because some white prince assumes the status of adult to child, master to slave, and verbally abuses a black person as if no restraint is required, no payback expected, deserved, or allowed.

And then there's Earl and Earl Mangualt and L. D. Lowmire from *Snapshots* in *Shut Out*. L. D. was five more inches when his first race coach was as large as you needed to grow to be a big man on the court. L. D. blessed with height and guts but up on his shoulders a head for trouble made his leg, thinking him to a wheelchair like a Tami woman chapped off at the knees by a machine. The poet here not imply that some don't make it. Not everybody's supposed to make it. Mary are called, few chosen, and the best go on, hoop art, love, my enterprise acquiring huge talent and colossal good fortune. The poet's not a mountain of bad news shadowing the few outrageous successes but how necessary it is to keep your eye on the real prize, the big picture, especially when you're in love with a game, the heroes of that game.

And in the case of hoop, the game I love, the big picture includes money, paradox, pain, poor drag-ridden conditions, bad luck, unemployment, sudden violence, death, imprisonment, the slow erosion of health and prospects, different corners of the spectrum of wealth, conserving, subjected to possessions, circumstances connected mostly by the overarching dog-eat-dog ethos reigning from top to bottom of the economic scale.

Spikes Lee knows most of the big picture I've been attempting to draw or know, all of it, probably more. *Ho Got Game* is more (and if an arena of Spikes Lee's arena didn't exist, we should assume he exists) on being more than just another pretty commercial, exploiting basketball to sell things.

And there's no doubt about the film's ambience. Spikes Lee's a high roller in this one. He's offering basketball as a mirror for the times. The game is oversaturated, then becomes hoop itself as well as mirror, a surface for rendering a reflection of society that's also a light for expression, for probing the dark recesses, destabilizing bright images of hoop, our national property. Jesus Shuttlesworth's future is star and sinner.

Clearly, *Ho Got Game* is loaded with music. Black-father-and-son stuff, prison stuff, real-talk stuff, family-violence stuff, race stuff, prison stuff, plain plain hoop-hooping stuff, bumping stuff. In your face stuff. At its deepest level, the film asks, What do fathers owe their sons, sons owe their fathers? Is there humanistic ceremony with which such debts can be paid? That in a fashion that creates intimacy, tears, opportunities for progress from generation to generation.

In this regard, what catches the eye are the flash cuts of hammering the world. Jesus is struggling to reach, a "white" world of privilege and wealth not without its own anarchy

here: penis—the State University of Redwood and Gomorrah, with its Stigfried-wife cords, courage, desecrated "brothers," veritable "vision" floating in the margins, blood sweat, an Elmer Gantry hoop coach.

Does Jesus have other choices? Is what's at stake the potential for Jesus to be a better person or better paid? If it's better paid, end of story. Heaven in the NBA, a seat on the coach's change. If better person, why doesn't the movie consider or present alternatives to leaving home? Officers, I can't help asking how the circumstances Jesus finds himself in parallel the economic causes of Spike Lee, Donald Washington, me.

What we witness in the film tells us the game founded on *Concussion*. As pure self-expression, as an exciting excuse for mental and physical exercise, as a means for developing confidence, backbone, spirit, and man-

de. It's the real game and still to be found on the playgrounds. Jesus doesn't have to leave home to find it. It's not confined to privileged suburbs or downtown colleges. Some people would say the last place to look for it is a suburban Square Garden.

So what's up? Why does this sharp, affecting, eye-opening film, low-budget stuff with a road story? Why is one more African American protagonist's quest for integrity, for actualization, identity, and fulfillment, probably enacted within the framework of escaping home? What about changing home, taking others with him or her, going back if he must go alone? What about changing what lies beyond home?

Other stories, aren't they? Once we desperately need to begin telling. Moves, moves, dance, start that cross over, not to touch a different side from where they started but to create and temperance new memory. And when the memory's real crap, that first, of course, that won't disappear, but color will remain when it means. More and less than a real locker. Different meanings. Meaning beyond the signs of black and white we've fashioned for ourselves. Will the signs open? Will these be hoop dancing in the streets?

A FAN GAME UP TO DENZEL ONCE, complaining him on Denzel after Denzel, saying it was his favorite film because of one scene in the movie he'd never forget, Denzel as Easy Rawlins in a boxing chair, napping on his front porch. The complaint isn't about Denzel's acting but about what the scene captured, another era, a lost world when time was more expensive, when people could sit still and wait, enjoy the bliss of doing nothing on the front porch of a lady home on property their money had earned. The dream of modest, urban gentrification captured them from the plantation. Old rural values, home, health, hard work, independence, respect, and intimacy with the seasons, the shifting cycles of nature, a deep, unadorned spirituality not too aware to walk nor as proud to enjoy the gently appraisals of the senses. Another mode of being in time, suddenly concrete, apprehended for a fun by his favorite scene in his favorite movie.

When Donald Washington and his wife, Paula Ann Pearson, travel with their kids to North Carolina, it is to recover some of that life, those values that allowed Easy to rely on his porch as Denzel.

When I went to North Carolina the first time, he says, it was for wedding. When my family got ready to leave, my little brother brought us to the airport. Papa's merry-go-round, Mother's

terry-eyed, a brother, he's like forty years old and he's twenty-eyed, so I said, 'Nite, I got to have some of this 'cause this is real' and genuine and this has history, this goes way back. Ponder's grandmothers, when all our kids got to know, when they met her she must've been ninety-nine years old.

Grandma Kate, she and her husband, John, worked for Dean Acheson, assistant secretary of state, I believe. They ran his house. My father-in-law, Pauline's dad, he was a principal at the top black school down there before desegregation. New Tom Conway, Ponder's father said the worst thing ever happened to him was immigration. He had a line school, great dancing team, symphony orchestra, and then they took his best students and best teachers. The only thing left from his school now is the gym and a place where you can come and get a state meal. Immigration comes and we get the gym and some cheese.

When my father-in-law comes to California all my friends, everybody shows up. He and his wife just sit there. They're in their late eighties now. And you know him still telling the same stories over and over, but he's got so much wisdom, so much for the kids to get. He sits them out in the yard and pushes them from the back of Prospero. He's lived his life from the back of Prospero.

Why don't we hear about the film *Amadeus*? It's a hell of a story. We're losing our memory of the old culture.

My kids are getting the history. I'm so glad I had a chance before my father passed away to go out with him on the land, the property we owned. Him working and showing us the boundaries, telling us the history, who was buried where, how they got the land, going back to the areas where blacks couldn't own land, and my great-great grandfather married an Indian who could own land and bought it in her name. You know, two-dollars an acre, a buck and a quarter an acre.

The lack of connection between father and son is one of the biggest defects in our culture. It's a space that needs to be filled, and if we don't fill it, all kinds of dangerous rage go in there, somebody gets their own and somebody gets theirs and everybody gets theirs. We're gonna start the struggle all over again with each new generation.

The kids probably had this kind of talk once with their grandfathers, but with me because he knows what to say. I'm not as good at it as he is. And he's a guy that didn't really have parents around. The extended family was crucial to him.

The ceremony at Grandma's Theater was important to me. Not that I don't like to parade myself out or make a scene like it's some kind of story. So I called the old man right before the ceremony. Asked him, said, 'Give me a little something, Papa, before I go. Will, be did. And it was quick. Like bang, bang, bang. Something about love and family. I'm not going to try to paraphrase. He's a serious guy.

Then one of the kids really wanted to go. Change your shirt, then, so we can be coordinated. They knew it was important to me, and they wanted to be a part of it. It was cool.

My grandfathers are the one I remember carrying me around on his shoulders. He was the male who gave me physical tenderness.

I think my kids get wisdom from their grandpa. Things I don't know how to articulate. I have days with my kids, try to give everybody these special days. My youngest boy for instance, I had a day with him where it was airport, movies, everything

flying, driving, boating. He knows how to do all kinds of modes.

I'm looking for things to say to him, but the day runs out to be. Okay he's just go on and walk and talk about things. I'm thinking, 'C'mon, you got to make this great speech. The generations before were about firing things, come out naturally. Looking out of the moment as opposed to trying to make a moment, because they had more time. Time to sit on the porch while wood, and the lesson, whenever, come out at the appropriate time. Maybe hours later. They didn't have to say. Sit down and have this five minutes of wisdom, I gotta run.'
Your father was a preacher, a father. Did he talk a lot?

No. He was working all the time. I didn't have a close relationship with him. I can remember the one time he threw me a ball. Once. And I can remember the one time he came to a game. My senior year in high school, the championship game. I scored two touchdowns, but we got crushed 44-12. I remember yelling and screaming at everybody 'cause we were scared of the other team. They'd whooped us earlier in the season. My team was letting me down in front of the old man, the one day he came.

Which is probably why I... I wouldn't say overcompensate... why I've gotten so involved in my kids' sports. I remember asking once, 'Don't hang around too much.' You know, are you embarrassed by me? They said, 'No, Dad. No.' 'Cause we wanted me. I got all this psychological stuff going on and my son breaks it down. We want to win. Dad. You help us win.

I'll tell you a funny strange kind of story. My father had a stroke. He was in the hospital. All twisted up. He knew the family was there, imagined us, but he couldn't speak at all. I was busy busy with Spike, working on the script for *Melvin X*, but I flew down to Virginia. Had to see my dad. I was wrapping up, needed to get back to New York, and I said, 'Dad, everything's going to be taken care of. Don't worry just get well.' I leaned over and kissed him on his forehead and he started choking. Couldn't breathe any more. Dad he's still choking. 'Cause I kissed him.' Like he's telling me, 'Just because I had a stroke, don't come in here and start kissing on me.

Always wondered if it was the kiss that started him choking. Nerve was running in, trying to calm him down. Wondered if he was thinking, 'Don't take advantage of me now, boy. If I could get up out this bed.'

Not that he was a mean man, he was a gentle man, but you know, from a different school. The fathers were from a different school. I recall the one time watching my father's face with my face because I remember how rough his beard was. I don't remember bunches of hugs and kisses and goo-goo and whatever.

Last time I saw him, he was shriveled up, dark blackened. Doctors sat me down and said, 'We're basically keeping him alive on drugs. So I knew it was about time, but again I had to leave. He was twisted to one side of the bed, so I went around there and held his hand and gave him my wrap-up speech again. You're going to make it. You're going to be all right. I got to go. Dad. You're going to be all right.

He gave me a stare. I'm talking about a stare. Like, 'Do I look like I'm giving him?' A stare you couldn't win. Didn't say a word, didn't move all day, but he got his look on his face. Kind of like a double take. Boy, did I just hear you right?

I'm twisted and shriveled up. I can't speak. I can't moved all day. They got all kinds of holes in me everywhere, keeping me alive, and you think I'm going to be all right. Do I look like I'm going to be all right?

We had a vote for him in Virginia, then a vote, service in Mount Vernon, New York, then we were going to bury him in White Plains. It was like a road show, like he was on tour. Everybody was about died up from crying at wakes and services, from all the steps we made. And still, to this day, I never shed a tear, didn't and I don't know why.

Your father's... I don't know. It's not that I worked at staying dry-eyed. I just did.

Did you ever see him cry? I don't think so. My father never. And I admit cry. Except at I got older, but you got to have somebody someone for you just means I know.

I wasn't a cryer, either, but I'm more apt to tear up now. Aching like therapy. I guess I've become softer from acting because you tap into the emotional places.

WHILE STILL in high school, James must be a father to his younger sister. You can see the pain, envy, and defeat as Jake Shattlesworth's eyes when he assumes from prison now first to reclaim the job of raising his children. This film to show the scenes that might have been his family. As father, actor, director, Deenel Washington wants to speak the stories Jake lost his chance to tell.

What needs to be passed on? We need the words, fuzzy scenes. The problems people can work out around the table.

I wonder how this scene, fuzzy scenes could fly on.

You can't dictate how people are going to react to the books you write. It depends on what they're bringing to it where they open it. Since they with theater and film. What do they bring when they come up? I can't concern myself too much with what people are going to think. You know, I gotta write the books.

If someone asks, 'What do you think the audience should get from this movie?' I say it depends on what they bring.

Eat your popcorn and get on outta here. Let the rest group in. Give your puppets off the floor.

CAGE AND DANCE: The earliest pro hoop games were often contested inside larval cages of metal screening or netting to

separate players and fans. Hence the word *cage* as a synonym for sportsplex for basketball players. Dance was part of the early game, too. Nightclubs like Harlem's famous Savoy sponsored teams and offered a package of a ball game followed by a dance to entice fans.

Caging dance: Dancing in a cage. Rules and forms re-



strict freedom of expression. Yet there's the exhilarating, deeply satisfying compromise of a soccer. A jazz solo. Creative tension. The eternal struggle between spirit and flesh. Seize and sell. Malcolm's need expending, flowering in prison. Harriet Tubman returning again and again to the burning shore ship of the South to rescue her sisters and brothers. Martin's dream making the true heart of the Birmingham jail.

Michael rising, defying gravity. Cage and dance. Dance and cage. No better game. ■

I HAVE I HAVE SEEN A CLONED BULL, AND I HAVE SEEN A BULL, AND AS IT happens, I saw them both at the same place because it is impossible to see the former without seeing the latter. It is impossible, in fact, to see a cloned bull without seeing a whole host of other bulls and a whole host of other things—namely, reality—that serve to explain both the cloned bull and cloning itself. (Enter bulls, for instance. How does one hope to understand cloning without seeing master bulls and the bull lives they lead under the pitiless gaze of genetically superior bulls? And artificial vagina—how does one hope to understand cloning without seeing artificial vagina and the man who fills them with semen every and least clean with KY jelly? Indeed, how does one hope to understand cloning at all without meeting men who identify themselves proudly as “tween guys” and others who have spent a great deal of their careers picking their semen up the great, humid asses of cows? It is impossible, I say, just as it is impossible to understand cloning without learning about the bloody miracle of slaughterhouse ovaries, without going to the slaughterhouse with the man who collects those ovaries, without coming to see the slaughterhouse itself not merely as a cauldron of death but as a source of life, albeit life of a weirdly second-hand kind. Just as it is impossible to understand cloning without learning a bunch of drunken embryologists describe their fact the human and their “weak team in their eyes”—describe the one race among them, the one great gene, the one great genius, who lasts nothing, not even the rebuke of nature itself. Just as it is impossible to understand cloning without meeting, firstly the great genius of cloning and watching him inspire a woman for a sleep.

I have seen these things. I have seen these things, and I have gone to these places, and I have met these people, and although I can't tell you for sure that I understand cloning, I can tell you that I no longer see it on TV or read about it in the newspapers and say to myself, Oh, yeah, sure—cloning. Assured reproduction. Knockoffs. Dubby the dairy Long di woman of the world. Cloning. Never I say to myself, Goddamn motherfucking cloning, because I have seen enough to know that it exists side by side with the goddamn motherfucking bulls, with the same kind of raucous reality I have seen enough to know that it exists not merely in the confines of *The New York Times* or in the explanations of professional sci-

entists or in the findings of professional engineers but also in the real and splendor of human dreams. I have seen enough to know that cloning's advice is as so very unapologetic, or even sudden, but rather *unavoidable*—that cloning exists at the culmination of human desire, human freedom, and human prerogative, even when the cloning involves only an embryo. I have seen enough to know that cloning is as much about death as it is about life, that it sits squarely between the laboratory and the slaughterhouse, and that it could have arisen only out of places where our freedom is absolute. In death, I have seen enough to know humans and animals come together in the alchemy of cloning to say that the creature always reveals himself in the created and that if you come

along with me to where I have been, to a world made of an embryo, I will give you a glimpse of the human soul.

AND BEHOLD: IS A WORLD MADE OF ANIMALS, OR, TO BE MORE PRECISE, ABS Global is a world of animals shaped by human hands and human minds and human aspirations—it is a world of human dogdom. A cattle-breeding company, ABS runs on seven hundred acres of rolling farmland about two miles outside Madison, Wisconsin, just down the road from the Church of the Norwegian Shovel, or something like that, and it is peaceful and clean and self-sufficient, with its own red-white-and-blue water tower in the shape of an inverted roadstop, and its own fields for the production of its own feed, and a lovely white headquarters building built in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright, and its own acres, with names like ABS Belvedere and Geneva Way, and mammals built over the buried carcasses of the two greatest bulls in its history, and three immaculate barns—the Holstein Hilton, Geneva Menzies, and Heritage Hall—populated by bulls of every possible variety: Holstein, Angus, Brahman, goddamn motherfucking crosses, and cloned.

You would think that the cloned bull would be just like one of the others. He's a clone, after all—he's not supposed to be unique, he's supposed to be a knockoff. He's supposed to be the same, and since your master bull and your goddamn motherfucking bull represent the two extremes of what ABS has to offer, bullfight, you would think that he would be the same as them. Your goddamn motherfucking bull? Well, he's your genetically superior bull. He's the bull whose precious sperm makes the foundation of ABS's business, which is the business of selling genetically superior bull semen all over the world. He's the bull who gets mated, so to speak, three times a day, three days a week, he's the bull who ejaculates into an artificial vagina, the long stretchable contraption lined with 80% jelly and warmed with water to the precise temperature of cow, he's the bull who never even sees a cow, who doesn't even need a cow, such is his urge to extend himself genetically, he's the bull responsible for ensuring the “genetic progress” of his species, he's the bull who gets to mount the master bull.

The master bull is, of course, your genetically inferior bull. He gets mated. He's passive and he's weak—such a sweet

HIS NAME IS GENE. HE IS THE INFINITE BULL. "THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO WANT GENE," SAYS ONE OF THE MEN AT ABS, "SO WE'LL GIVE THEM GENE. WE'VE MADE A LOT OF HIM."

little bull—and his passivity and his weakness, well, that's enough to create your genetically superior bull, because, as the ABS people will tell you, “it's not about love, it's about dominance,” and so when you go out to Heritage Hall to see ABS's cloned bull, the first thing you see is not a clone but rather a genetically superior bull trying to give it to a genetically inferior bull. The first thing you see is a sidewalk clearing lit by more yellowed thermal light, and a bunch of guys in light blue coveralls, and a master bull, smallish and blond, tied to a post, and then behind him, a great black cow of bull, swartling, gleaming, rising to an incredible height, and then crouching down on the master bull like a worm, while one of the guys in coveralls scurries to catch his sperm in the

embryo and in the findings of professional engineers but also in the real and splendor of human dreams. I have seen enough to know that cloning's advice is as so very unapologetic, or even sudden, but rather *unavoidable*—that cloning exists at the culmination of human desire, human freedom, and human prerogative, even when the cloning involves only an embryo. I have seen enough to know that cloning is as much about death as it is about life, that it sits squarely between the laboratory and the slaughterhouse, and that it could have arisen only out of places where our freedom is absolute. In death, I have seen enough to know humans and animals come together in the alchemy of cloning to say that the creature always reveals himself in the created and that if you come



DAVID WINTER/ST

artificial vagina so that it can be frozen and sold. It is an exhibition of eugenics in motion; it is a tableau of genetic winners and losers, and so you would think that the cloned bull would have to die in somewhere between those two outcomes. It doesn't, though. There are hundreds of bulls on AHS's property and the clone is different from all of them, because their time, someday, will be up, and they will go to the slaughterhouse. The master bull will stop eating the generously superior bull, and the genetically superior bull, after an average of two to three years of service, will either be used primarily by other bulls or won't be able to fill the cup as he used to. They will go to slaughter, and the thing that makes AHS's cloned bull different from them is that he came from slaughter—he went the other way.

His name is Gene, and he is the clone of an animal that never lived. He is an abortion, and, at the same time, he is normal. He was conceived once by conventional means, by sperm and egg, but he was aborted when his mother was slaughtered, then he was conceived again, as an AHS embryo, in eggs, then he was born, in February, egg, out of the womb of a virgin heifer.

Confused? Well, then, let Mike Bishop, head of AHS's research, tell us. "Gene came from a fetus we picked up at the slaughter that was thirty-seven or thirty-eight days old. From that fetus's genital ridge, we identified cells that we made into an immortalized cell line, and then we cloned Gene from those immortalized cells."

More confused? Well, when a mammal is dead before it's alive, the path it follows to birth is of necessity somewhat complicated. Here it is again. A fetus slides out of a cow when the slaughterhouse works up a job, where an attached embryo reduces it to individual cells. Some of those cells are turned into a cell line designed to live forever. The nucleus of one of those cells is cloned—transferred into an egg whose own nucleus has been removed. The egg is tricked into believing as if it had been fertilized by a sperm cell; it divides and grows and becomes an embryo. The embryo is then cloned again, taking along its reprogrammed DNA, and transferred into a surrogate mother. A bull is born, and his name is Gene. He is black and white, mostly black. He is a heiferster. He is of no particular genetic distinction—sadly, he would surely be headed to the slaughterhouse were it not for the circumstantial situation of his conception and his unusual place in AHS's history, and yet even if he were to be slaughtered, he cannot die. He doesn't even get the chance to die, for his cell line keeps going, for if he dies, he can simply be re-created, ever-

ter, again and again. Indeed, he has already been re-created and sent to be born in the wombs of other virgin heifers.

As Mike Bishop says, "There's a lot of people who want Gene, so we'll put them Gene. We've made a lot of him."

He is the Infante Bull, though the people at AHS don't think of him that way. They are accidental adherents, reluctant metaphysicians. "I am a complicated man," the company's CEO, Marc van't Noordende, insists, and so when you ask him why AHS has involved itself in cloning, he gives a simple answer: "Animals breed. Every breeding is a random coupling of genes. It is unpredictable. Cloning is predictable."

Its uniformity, consistency, an indulgence of the human taste "to eat the same steak today as you did yesterday, to eat the same steak all the time," according to one AHS customer—that's Gene. More meat, more milk, more cheese—that's what Gene represents, for AHS wants "to increase the world's protein availability," and so, in fact, does Gene. In moments? Well, yes, but he's immortal, sort of, but we don't want him for his immortality, we want him for his flesh, his hide, his hooves. He can live forever, sort of, but we don't want him to live forever; because, goddamme, we're hungry, and we're hungry and if we created immortality, well, it was only because we were dreaming of meat.

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A SLAUGHTERHOUSE?

No really. Have you ever walked a slaughterhouse—as grocery-burning, bloody-throat filling stank?

Have you ever heard a slaughterhouse—in scratch and rust, its dull, distant sound that creeps into your bones like some endless, filthy snarl?

You have?

Okay, then. Have you ever seen slaughterhouse meat? Have you ever gone to the slaughterhouse with the guy whose job it is to collect them, the guy in a white coat and a hard hat and safety goggles and earplugs and stinky rubber boots, the guy who comes to the slaughter every other morning just for death (he like that)?

Well, here's what you should know about him. He looks the same as the guys who are there for death. I tell, those guys, the guys who work in death day after day, the guys who, when they do a good job, get a primo parking space that gets, well, FLEET EMPLOYER OF THE MONTH—those guys don't even notice the guy in the life business, anymore, because he's just another guy with a knife, you know? And when the cow or heifer left of the cow, what's left of old Floose or Daisy or Beane or number 102 or number 1003—comes around, he takes a crack at it

That's what a slaughterhouse is, anyway: a bunch of guys taking cracks at cows, guy cows or hens, also cows a day it all happens pretty quickly at your local abattoir. First, you get your rack, dappled heifer, and she's a good producer—twenty thousand pounds of milk a year or something—but then she gets old and her production drops and she goes to the side barn and then she goes to the truck and then she goes to the chute and then the floor drops out from under her and some guy looks her up on the head and another guy cuts her throat and then she goes to its right-right stomachs of guys with axes and sharp knives taking a crack at her—one guy who takes the hide and another guy who takes the hooves and another who takes the ears and another who drains the blood and another who takes the head and another who takes the nose and another whose interest is in the south and another whose interest is in the tongue and another whose interest is in the counter—and that's your guy of course, the guy who works in the life business, because that's where the life business begins, with the subsection of eggs from an ungulate having a very bad day.

You wouldn't think it, would you? All those headlines about cloning, all that prap— you wouldn't think that it began in a place like this, in a place that smells like this, in a place that sounds like this—but it does, for when an animal is cloned, its nucleus—its genetic material—gets transferred to

birth, ten minutes dead but somehow newly alive, newly named—and the guy from the life business has to do it. A heart is big as a basketball, a windpipe is big as a fence post, a plump of mammary propped up like a pup tent, a mump of liver, an entire stomach full filled with more post cows' cutlets, spleen fragrant— it's all there, the whole thing, right in front of him, an entire anatomy lesson heaped into a conveyor or belt railing by at a rate of 340 cows per minute, and he has to reach in, with his gloved hand and his sharp knife, and somewhere in that goose, quarter-ton mess of its recent past, he has to find the eggs, he has to find the life, he has to find the future.

THE FUTURE IS HISTORY, OF COURSE. EVERYBODY THINKS THE FUTURE is the computer, but the future is really the gene, the nucleus, the egg, and the embryo.

And do you know why? Because if you can do it, improve the computer. But you can only fuck-nick biology.

I mean, you wouldn't believe what biology will unfathom. You wouldn't believe what you can do to it, and then what you have to do to it, because you can, because you have biology's permission. Cloning? Biology asked for it. The breakdown of individual species? Hell, biology manages it, because

LIFE IS JUST A PROTEIN DREAM, AND PROTEINS ARE INTERCHANGEABLE. NO EMBRYO, EVEN HUMAN, IS INVOLATE, AND THERE'S NO GENOME THAT CAN'T BE NICKED.

to an unfertilized egg, and the egg comes from an ovary, and the ovary comes from the slaughterhouse. Hell, an animal like Gene comes completely from the slaughterhouse—a cell from a slaughterhouse fetus winds up "fertilizing" an egg from a slaughterhouse ovary—and although that's nothing new, although the practice of collecting oviducts from the slaughterhouse has been going on since the mid-eighties—well, Gene is not the only creature being cooked up in the laboratories of America. There will be a lot of animals like Gene soon. There is demand now for slaughterhouse ovaries, and the guy who comes to collect them has to collect something like twenty pounds of them, three days a week, and so he gets a good place on the processing line, and he gets his crack at the cow right after the veterinarians get theirs. The veterinarians yes—the veterinarians have a big job in the slaughterhouse, because by the time the cow reaches them, it's headless, hideless, and hoofless but still full and so it's their job to take a crack at it with their sharp knives and, in one or two long, wiggly strokes, to do what it's called as paucity of cow anatomy, past and present—regis. He called its inner life. The veterinarians are, to a man, dark-skinned and in small and agile in boys. While the guy from the life business stands in his rubber boots on the slaughterhouse floor, the veterinarians stand above him, right up on the line, so close to those living moments of bovine flesh that when they run their hands they are instantly dwarfed and look like concubines trying to open immortal clones. The cows past blood and the cow comes' cattle, whitening anatomy. All that stinking sweat, that cold sweat, massive and molten, pink and grey and purple and pale-yellow, well, it all just comes tumbling out, like an entire second animal, like a screaming splat of

biology area protein as the basis for everything, which means that everything can be moved around and that, at some deeply maternal level, everything is more or less equal, especially in the embryonic stage.

Take, for instance, the slaughterhouse ovaries—yeah, those slaughterhouse ovaries, the ones you just saw get collected in the meat forest. They were cow ovaries, but they didn't get used for the propagation of cows or, for that matter, bulls. The guy who collected them took them back to the University of Wisconsin to a lab run by one of the pioneers of cloning, Neal Ford. There a technician at a station picked at them with a needle and removed what are known as the oocytes—the actual immature eggs. The oocytes—well, like a lot of biology, an oocyte is an easy lay. Though it's made to fast with sperm, it will, when its own nucleus has been removed, take a nucleus transferred from another cell as a sperm cell and begin growing and dividing as an embryo. This is what most people call cloning and what embryologists call nuclear transfer and this is what was done at first in a lab with the slaughterhouse ovaries—with one crucial difference. First's lab used bovine oocytes as surrogates for nuclear transfer, but it didn't fill them with strictly bovine nuclei. It was an effort to determine whether cow eggs could be a "universal" recipient of human transfer; it's implied, there with the meat of meat, sheep, pigs, and monkeys. And the thing is, it worked, the thing is, the eggs developed into embryos, and the embryos began to grow, to live, until they either died or were destroyed.

I learned about the Wisconsin study on the first day of the annual conference of the International Society for Trans-



COW PRINTED

ety, which is a professional society for embryologists. It was big news, not only because it undermined biology's central promiscuity but because the inclusion of monkeys in the study seemed to indicate that a nucleus emerged from a human cell could come to temporary life as a cow egg recovered from a bucket of slaughterhouse slop—which, given biology's lack of discrimination, is probably true. Indeed, these are the things one learns at an IETS conference.

That no embryo is inviolate, and no genome can't be misused, has biology, indeed, a downright pedagogic in the combination it will accept, that sheep embryos can be inserted in the reproductive tracts of rabbits and cow embryos in the reproductive tracts of sheep, that human embryos can be, and are, nurtured on layers of cells from cows, or, as an embryologist would say it, "from cow" just as he would say "from human" and not "from humans."

Thus embryologists, as a breed, as a species, tend to be called from farms, and that the rise of embryology may be seen as compensation—or as revenge—for farming's demise, that a lot of embryologists either attended or teach at ag schools and so wear a lot of cowboy boots, that where they wear ties, their ties tend to be patterned with spermatozoa.

Thus there is hierarchical order among embryologists, and that embryologists who work with cow tend to look down on embryologists who work with pig; that pigs are very difficult to work with and difficult to clone; that the goal of those who work with pig is the creation of pigs whose organs bear a trace of human genes so that they can be used as human organ transplants.

That this—the migration of human genes into animals for therapeutic or pharmaceutical purposes—is called transgenesis, that a company called FPL has created a transgenic cow with human genes, for the purpose of producing “humanized” milk, with 2.5 grams of human protein per liter, that a company

Are they grocers, three processed scientists who've gone on cloning in a practical sense? No, and they'll be the first to tell you they don't have to be. They just have to have the machines. They just have to be willing to use fifty thousand hours of scientists on the creation of a monozygotic cow. They just have to be willing to accept the fact that, as one says, "you've got to kill a few hundred to get a few hundred to deliver." And they're going to get anywhere. They just have to be willing to bring the ethics of the *ferm*—where life and death are of equal ability—to the act of creation, and that is why, when some of them cross over, when some of them migrate from the farm to the clinic, from livestock to humans... well, they could do it. They can move? They could fall out of humans, just as they can fall out of cows. They could fall out of the machines, just as they do in some doo technology. It's not that hard, you know? In fact, I'll just start you read about in the newspapers, the use of the genome sequence as universal signpost in nuclear transfer—it's pretty pretty simple. Oh, sure, it's hard work, but it's not as hard as surgery—it's not rocket science, it's more like microbotics—surgery-free. You put on your hat and you get your pickles and you get your tools and you get your microscope and you're working with what they call "human embryos." The miracle is not what they call it, but it's a human embryo.

The miracle is what they can't do. It's what they fear doing. It's the thing that holds them back—the thing they talk about, see at night at hotel bars, if they get drunk enough. It knows how because I spent a lot of time at the hotel bar, getting drunk with embryologists, and one night one of them started telling me about the only genius he knew, a scientist who became a genius because of his willingness to do just about anything, including the impossible and the forbidden. The genius's name was Street Wildcards, and the embryologist who told me

not from a spaceship—it's something else. It's from you. It's from us. And wherever it is, it's the most important thing that God has given to you know? I work with cows. I love these cows. I cradle them in a lab. I deliver them. I resuscitate them. I stay up at night with them, that I don't have that same feeling with cows that I had when I was handling human life."

"Awe," he said. "The feeling that we can never be more powerful than God."

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A COMET?

No, really, as you don't know a five-ball coach or an actor or any of the ephemerals that pass for greatness I mean the guy who broke the eggs. The guy who intended and proved that, even after the most radical neuroscience, you could still *own* life. The guy who opened the gates that the carcass of life pursued him was created. The guy who went into embryology when nobody went into embryology on the belief that "there's no spot in the universe too small to support a hero." The guy who learns himself to be a warrior and learns the system he spent working in virtual solitude among bands of sheep in Cambodia, Ireland, or "that strange of Troy." The guy who loves his friends "I don't know anyone I just hate them" and the guy who stows, in his scientific endeavors to be "first of undecorated overcoat" and who wound up being first of nature itself—evolved, who wound up being biologically speaking, the fittest race on the planet. The guy who basically overrode nuclear transfer in favor of materials. The guy who not only *owned* a different animal by combining the cells of a sheep with the different cells from the guy who fucking ate it. How you see this man?

Will, neither had I and I met Steve Willmetts. I had seen clothes, and I had seen friends, and I had been to universities, and I had been to travelling companies, and I had attended an embryology conference, and I had heard the confusions of embryology spoken by their harrowing awe of the human soul, but I had never met someone who could tell me what transgression does to the imagination. I had never met someone who says one he could do something else and so could avoid to meet the source of his—and our—imaginary. I had avoided it here, never a woman, almost a golden-age priest, and so I went down to Orlando, Florida, to see what Steve Willmetts was like when he looked at an embryo through a microscope and saw life—life itself—twisting before him.

We went out and had steak. That's the first thing about genius. We're hungry. Hell, it's just about Maudslayi, if Sreen's any



For the last twenty years, Steve Williams has been working his salary. A thirty-year-old man, since 1972, the first official national difference, he's the first to be part in 1972. The first to be part in 1972.

endanger. He acts just about alone, exclusively. He hunts and hangs the horned heads in his house and keeps around on his grange. He is fifty-five years old, and half-mad with alcohol, illegal U.S. arms to check out, and a wife who has stopped trying to live in front of a camera. "I'm not a bad person," says the man, "but non-children are so stiff. If they were young their act, they'd already be demanding it." He is Danish and has a bawling and roachlike Danish drawl. He is small and muscular, and under his graying brown hair, he has the face—wide and honey-soft—a masculinity like Jay's puppy-blond, like the face of a young man. He wears a cowboy hat and a faded, stained, and frayed orange and patterned button-down shirt, the same as Prosdocio to whom he compares himself. He lives in a big pink house, in a fairly dilapidated grove of subdivisions on a large piece of central Florida's orange fields, with his wife and two children. The house is decorated with paintings by the artist, and the yard is overgrown with weeds and has a few dead trees that have made, through of animals. There is a basketball hoop in the driveway and an enclosed pool in the back, and when we returned from lunch, he said, "You know, some people sit, 'Oh, what's the great genius, what's the great Dr. Willard doing sitting by his pool, on his big back, with his legs crossed, and he is the tremendous? Why we're here doing? Well, it's because I've already done the better, because That's why."

He began in the slaughterhouse. One day, thirty years ago, Sossie Willardson worked under a Davis slaughterhouse as a livestock veterinarian—he had been assigned to do inspections—and walked out seething not only to become a scientist answer to the death and brutality of a hell, in some ways, he didn't even own of any papers was used as an owner who looking over?) and carried over "I tried not to read the books". He embryo stuff, because you could do ask was life—well, then you got away

to the embryo? Well, put it this way: In 1973, the embryo meant one thing, it meant another. It used to mean it was involved in the gesture of conceiving, rolling cells subsumed within the circle shell. It used to stand for a single moment, and I focused on how it felt

STEEN WILLADSEN HAS NOTHING AGAINST HUMAN CLONING, BECAUSE "WHATEVER IT IS THAT MAKES A HUMAN AN INDIVIDUAL, IT'S NOT THERE IN THE EMBRYO."

cy called ACTs are cloned transgenic cows, named Charlie and George, that IPL and ARS and ACT are all complicit in the race to clone transgenic cows that will produce, in their prodigious udders, an especially lucrative human protein called human milk albumin, which is used in blood transfusions, that the market for HSA worldwide is a \$1 billion a year; that ARS is working on its cloning program to transform it from a company funded by the sale of bull semen into a company funded by the sale of human pharmaceuticals; that even though the B725 contract mainly concerned livestock embryology, its culture was blown because an innovation patented by James Watson was key to cloning humans and not just cows; that Watson was not named livestock, that harvest in vitro fertilization was, in fact, started by livestock embryology; that the conference was full of livestock embryologists looking for work in human IVF; and that, in the words of one, "it's all just money money."

See, this is their secret—this is what embryologists know, this is what they've witnessed, this is what they've experienced firsthand: that life is just a protein drama and a protein nightmare, that proteins are unchangeable, that they can be moved around.

about him spoke of him with a wary slant of irony in his eyes because Saxon was the one brave enough to break the egg, because the snail that strangles people now Stern was doing ten years ago; and Stern was now out of livestock embryology and working part-time in a couple of human IVF labs.

And that was when the embryologist pulled me aside and explained the difference between himself and a man like Stein Wilander. The embryologist didn't work in human IVF; you see, the didn't care to. He was a livestock embryologist. He was a dock, blunt, gruff, semiconscious man, with a rufous face and a reddened beard. He had trained a great many embryologists, and some of those had stayed in livestock, and some had gone into human IVF.

"Human is different," he said quietly. "If you've ever been to an IVF lab and handled human embryos, you'd know. It's different."

"The fucking in the room," he said. "There's a preserve there."

"It's hard to explain," he said. "It doesn't even come from the embryo. It comes from your brain. It's not an eye, and it's

Tough



Guys Dance

... and other life lessons (like how to father, win, wear clothes, and make a comeback) from a guy who's lived a little bit, James Caan.

編次序 主理得價 差和價 公和價 附註

esquirefiction

Which wife flirts with which husband?
Which towel goes home with which
lod? Is there an order to the chaos of
the human heart? A math whiz
tries to make sense of the
incalculable equations of summer.

BY
RON
CARLSON

Towel Season

SUDDENLY

IT WAS JUNE, AND THERE WERE STRANGE TOWELS IN THE HOUSE. THERE WERE STORCS on the table in the entry, two or three towels, Edison knew, were not their towels. In the hall, he'd atop over logs, striped poles of storage, wet towels waiting to be washed. The kids, Rebecca and Toby, pedaled home in bathing suits, alien towels hung from their necks. Then, Edison trapped in he walked through the laundry room carrying his files, his feet tangled in a great heap of those damp things. The conversation brought him from the kitchen, and she looked down at him, the absent-minded professor, his papers around his head. "You're kind of too young for this kind of thing," she said. He didn't look uncomfortable. She knew if she left him there and went back to her potato salad, there was a good chance he'd simply go to sleep. He was up past one almost every night working on his latest mathematical project. This was his final experimental journey for the firm, if it worked, he was going to be able to go on and on toward the edge. If not, he would join all the other middle-level engineers

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW BENSON



"Where towels are there?"

The answer was, depending on the day, the Plazens, the Platts, the Reeds, the Rends, the Rends and the Rends and their pool just down the street, the Platts and their pool around the corner, and the Rends and their pool and their pool from the driveway where all the children (just usually) of these people attended.

"These, dear, are the Platts, and we'll be returning there this evening when we go over there for a cocktail, so get your work done. She picked up her files and had them on his chest. "Okay? Overcoming? Drink on your porch? Remember? Don't worry—when the time comes, I'll drive in all over."

Edison crawled to his feet. "All right," Leslie watched him go into his study and then she stuffed the towels in the washer. He was working on the most advanced and important calculations of his life. The first kept only one or two theoretical mathematicians, and this project would diminish if Edison would make the cut.

The summer developed into those dinners and all the shuffling towels. Toward the end, they loaded the car and drove his hundred yards to the Platts' and delivered with the Platts and the Rends toward the gate, carrying their coolers and cassettes and Tupperware containers and the bundle of towels. They seemed like zombies in a fog to Edison, because he was in a fog most of the time himself, working so many hours at his computer screen, and inside the grating command, even though they'd all seen one another at the Reeds' three nights ago. Edison and Allen Reed opened bottles of Corona and sat out on the picnic table in the steady heat of the season. These evenings always frustrated Edison, who saw them as some kind of puzzle. Part of him was still at his green screen, making equations, while he watched the children slip into the green pool and the women sit out the food.

"How's the project going, Ed?" Allen asked him. Reed, large and tall, was an apologetic engineer for the firm. Ed looked at the man's face, so dark from the sun it seemed part of the surroundings. What kind of engineer has such a tan? Allen Reed was about five years older than Edison and had an effortless confidence for theoretical math.

"I'm working every day," Edison said. He was looking at the bench where all the towels had gathered in another fourteen towels. There was no way they were going home with the first bottles. Folded these in multicolored order, they seemed part of some problem. Edison had solved this week or two of work on now.

"Yes, well, you let me know when they find a market for chess and its theory, and I'll come over with my slide rule and give you a hand." Allen was going to put Edison on the shoulder, which he did with people he was kidding, but he saw that Edison was about two seconds from giving the joke. They were all used to these odd moments with Edison.

The thing that was said about Edison at least once every party after he'd been asked a question and then wanted his or her answers to answer, or after one of his remarks, was "I'm glad I'm not a genius," which was meant as a kind of compliment and many times simply as a space filler after some awkwardness.

And even once in the summer, on the way home from a cocktail, lobby who was six years old, started crying, and

when questioned about his grief, answered in a whisper, "Daddy's a genius?" He cried as Leslie carried him to the house in one of the large, pale blue towels that Edison knew was not there, and he cried himself to sleep.

Understanding his bed, Leslie said, "Ed, can you lighten up a little, he's not there any more."

"Sure," he said as she got into bed beside him. "I think I can do that." A long moment later, he turned to Leslie and said, "But I'm not a genius. I'm just in a tough section of this deal now. Can you tell Tobi? I'm just busy. I need to finish this project."

"I know you do," she whispered. "What should I tell him is a kid?" When they were alone, he'd begin to try to explain his work to her in metaphors, and she'd continued the game through his career, asking him for comparisons that she'd then inhibit, embolden. Right after they were married and Edison was in graduate school, he'd work late into the night in their apartment and crawl into bed with the calculations still penciling in his head. "What's it like?" Leslie would ask. "Where are you now?" She could still be his mentor, he'd tell her in territories.

"Two crossed alleys open ground, and the wind has trapped now. My hope is to find a way through this next place."

"Mountain?"

"Right. Okay, mountains—blank, very few markings." He spoke carefully and with a quiet smile. "They're steep, hard to see."

"Is it cold?"

"No, but it is strange. It's quiet." Then he'd turn to her in bed, his eyes bright, alive. "I'm way past the path. I don't think anyone has climbed this route before. There are no trails, handholds."

Leslie would smile and kiss him in that close proximity. "Sleep going," she'd say. "Halfway up that mountain, climb a woman with a capricious cat and a chicken salad sandwich—see."

Then a smile would break across his face, too, and he would see her, kiss her back, and say it. "Right. You."

Now in bed, Edison said, "Tell him it's like." He poured and sat on the options, "playing hide-and-seek."

"At night, in the forest?"

"Yes," he was whispering. "It's a forest, and parts of that thing are all over the place. It's going to take a while."

THE HANOVERS'

everywhere as the summer, a ritual that Edison knew well. The kids swim while the adults drink, then the kids are and went off into the vastness corners of the house primarily for television, where the adults are their grilling steaks or salmon or shrimp kabab and drink a new wine while a kid dark and they thrived. It was easy and harmless, and whenever was up was sent to the kitchen or the cooler for more potato salad or beer and returned and gave whenever was or was whatever he or she had asked for and used as a husband or wife might. "There you are, honey. Can I get you anything else, dear?" And maybe there'd be some nudging, a woman punctuating the sentence with her lap at a man's shoulder or a man taking a woman's shoulders in both hands possessively.

At some point, there'd be Jenny Hanover and Scott Platts coming out of the house holding hands and Jenny announcing, "Scott and I have decided to elope," with him

saying, "I've got to have a woman who uses anyone else on everything." In their bedrooms in the dark, arms around each other's waist, now purring and spooning the group, they'd look at it as if it were a possibility. The right adults were interchangeable like that, as someone who knew, Edison thought, escape two—two no doing and too tall, I'd look like a woman's last walking out of the patio doors look like that. I'd see everybody. Around the pool, the towels floated as random splashes where they'd been thrown. Edison listened to the men and women talk, and when they laughed, he used to laugh, too.

DAYS,

while Leslie took her and her to the men from the orthodontist, and some lessons, Edison worked on his project. He was deep in the fields, each problem more like a long long lake. He had to go way into each to see the next corner and then those to see forward. He had to keep his mind against it the more time, one slip and he'd have to backtrack.

Edison described his work to Leslie now the same way he began to think of it. Following her people through the forest, with some weaving through the trees, some leading behind some and changing shapes, emerging at different speeds. He had to keep track of them all, shepherd them through the trees and over a hill that was not in sight quite yet and how down up for a while. The above was Leslie's contribution. He'd work on butcher paper with pencils, and then after two or three o'clock, he would enter his equations into the computer and walk out onto his house, his face vague, dazed, not quite there yet.

SUMMER BEGAN IN

August, and women began stepping by with towels. Edison would hear Jenny Hanover or Paula Platts call from the front hall, the strange little voices coming to him at first from the field of numbers progressing across the wide paper. "Don't get up! It's just me! See you tonight at the Reeds'" and then the door would shut again, and Edison would fight with his mind used to stay close to the shuffling numbers as they squirmed and worried. He felt, at such moments, as if they were trying to gather a parachute in a tricky and persistent wind.

Some days, there'd be a too face suddenly at his study door. Paula Platts or Melissa Reed, saying, "So then where the grass is due" and please two or three folded towels on the chair. The incursion was always more than Edison could process. He looked up at the woman wearing a hot-pink tank top, sunglasses in her hair, and like as if he'd been struck. The calculations held, upped. Edison felt involved in some accident, his hands collapsed, his heartbeat in his

face. Then she was gone, wherever she had been, leaving something about tonight or tomorrow night at the Platts' or the Reeds', and Edison found himself disoriented, wrecked. His children knew not to barge in that way, because it meant his day's work would vanish, and he'd spend hours looking out the front window or waiting the neighborhood in the summer heat. The chain between his pencil figures and the figure of the soul would be that, a chain, and there was no bridge.

At the Reeds' and the Platts, while the kids splashed in the pool and Scott flared with Melissa and Allen with Paula, sometimes passing in and out of the house in some business family life, while everyone was fed grilled meat of all kinds and Paula Platts' red potato salad would get out that Edison was brusque, at least not hospitable, and Jenny Hanover lifted her wine to him, saying, "Why, darling, you looked absolutely like I was going to mail your trigonometry?" Edison smiled at her, feeling Leslie's gaze,

he'd promised he would try to do better. Holding the smile was pure effort.

"And you looked at me like you didn't even know who I was," Paula added.

Edison didn't know what to say. He'd held the smile, tried to chuckle, might have, and then it became painfully clear that he should say something. He couldn't say what he thought. I don't know who you are. The face glowed in a circle around him, the healthy skin, all these words. "Well, my brother," and there was a pause that they all knew they would fill time, and people knew they would have to do something—though, get up for more beer, make a joke. He'd done this in this group a dozen times already this summer, what an oddball.

Then he spoke. "Do you who's double-checking my lottery numbers?"

And the pause spilled and Dan Hanover laughed, mired, and the laughter carried all of them across, and it was filled with gratitude and something else that Edison saw in Leslie's eyes, something about him. He'd scored a point. There was a new camaraderie through the night, more laughter, the men brought Edison another beer, Leslie was suddenly at ease. Children drifted in and out of the pool, dodging between their parents' laps for a moment before floating away, dropping towels here and there. Edison, the new center of the group. It's strange—both warm and doored.

THE FOLLOWING

days were perhaps from any he'd known. People treated him, how? Cordially, warmly—more than that. This new fellowship confound



him. He'd obviously broken the code and was inside now. His research crashed and vanished. At the butcher paper with his pencils, he was like a man on the silent woods at night, nothing awfully for things he could not see. "I'm going in circles."

"Is any of a familiar? Is there a mouse?" Leslie asked. "Shall I think the horn of the silver host? Start a husband?"

"There's no light no word," I'm called."

"Go up! You'll see the horizon."

But he didn't. In the work he'd done, all the linkages had been checked, and after two days the mountain pulled and dried and the adhesive disintegrated, and while he stood at the sheet, the rugged edge of the last figure, it all ran away. He was going to have to turn around, follow the abstract calculations back until he could gather it all again. Edison left the room. He walked the long blocks of his neighborhood in the heat, lost and straying.

Days, he began to ferry the kids around and was surprised to start learning the names of their friends: the young Plana, the Hawner girl, the Reed twins. He was surprised by everything—the pieces of a day, the way they fit and then didn't. He'd wait in the van at the night house, and the children would wander out of the movie theater and climb in. It was a wonder. He started cooking, which he'd always enjoyed, but now he started cooking all the time. Parmesan on grilled-chicken sandwiches, variations on spaghetti.

He delivered words, warning sticks of cartoon characters to the Hawners, Denver Broncos-logs towels to the Plana, who had transferred from Colorado, and bags, striped dishes to the Reeds, always trading for his family's marginal accomplishments. He became familiar with the women, dropping in on them at all daytime hours, calling through the front doors. "Man in the house," and hearing after a beat, Jenny or Melissa or Paula call, "Thank heaven for that. Come on in!" if the kids were in the car, he'd drop the towels and paintings and heavy suit of not, sometimes there was coffee. Melissa Reed put a dollop of figment in her hair, Jenny Hawner drank directly out of a later Evan bottle, offering him any of her husband's size (Dan was a member of Aiz of the Monthly, Paula made him help her make lemons whole from scratch. All of the women were grateful for the company. These years and the weekend parties made Edison an old new life feel as if he were part of a new, larger family, with women and children everywhere, he was with people more than he'd ever been.

IN BED, HE DIDN'T HAVE to talk, his hands ran over Leslie in his approach. She held him firmly, adjusted,

asked, "What is it like now, the project?" Edison put his head against her neck, stopped still for a beat, and then began again working along her throat. "Ed, should I worry about you? Where are you with the research?" He lifted away from her in the dark, and then his head descended and the caught it. She turned toward him now, and he pulled to first his hand, but she held it. It was an odd moment for them. "Edison," she said. "What is going on?" They were lying still, not moving. "Are you okay? Have you stumbled on a log and hit your head on a sharp outcrop?" Has a maybe bear chased you up a noisy tree? Did he bite you? Should I call that helicopter they use in the mountains? He could hear the smile in her voice. "What do you need me to do? Where are the little people?" It was clear he was not going to answer. "They're waiting for you. Go get them. And I'm waiting, too, remember?" By the silver bus. You'll make it, Ed. But when the last of his hand and kissed him, he held still one second and then simply turned away.

The project needed to be done this season, it couldn't be smaller for another year. They'd make him off it and have him cooking beans at the group clubhouse. They put you out on the frontier like that once, and when you came back broken you joined one of the teams, your career in close orbit, the adventure gone.

MEANWHILE, IN THE HOUSE, HE HAD SECOND-CLASS to Paula at the counter while they squeezed the lemons their arms reaching, he began having a drip of Jager with Melissa, and when Jenny Hawner would ask him to the door, they'd hug for five seconds, which at one second over the line. He could feel her water bottle against his back.

SOME AFTERNOONS, HE WOULD STAY IN THE DOORSTEP OF THE little study and see the spill of pencils where he'd been for days. He kept the hallway clear of laundry, but he never went to that corner of the house anymore. They crowded each other through the days. In bed, he was silent. She had to open him. "Okay, man, should I try to drive the bus closer, break the horn?" You want me to bring in some of these little terms whole? Some kind of signal? We're running low on crackers."

After a moment, he said, "I'm not sure."

"Can you see any landmarks?"

"Not really," he answered. "I can't. His voice was flat, exhausted, trying to imagine it all. It's steep. It's too dark. I'm having some trouble with my footing."

"I know you are. Every-body does," Leslie said, opening her eyes and looking in

his serious face. "Keep your own path. Dig your feet in. Try."

PAULA WANTED TO KNOW IF HE REALLY WORKED FOR THE CIA, Jenny wanted to know if his IQ was really low, Melissa asked him if he should get implants. She was drinking her hand coffee at the kitchen table, and she simply lifted her chin. The drink, like Leslie's wood on the corner of the table. The afternoon he was home between crumbs were the worst. Now his calculations seemed a cruel puzzle, someone else's work, dead, forgotten, useless.

EDISON WAS A SHINY LIGHT AT THE PARTIES, MAKING recipes and inside information on the children. There was always someone talking at his right hand, a man or a woman, he was open now yet still ironic. His difference was clear. He was the only man still not settled, the only man still becoming, unknown, and it gave him an allure that Leslie felt, and she watched him the way you watch the heat in a fairy tale—to see if it really something very good in their making. Certainly the parties were less of a success for her now, not having to worry about Edison's strangeness, his potential for griefs, but his new state seemed everything else.

By August, the women's familiarity with Edison was apparent. At the cocktails, they spoke in a kind of shorthand and others had to ask them to back up, explain, if they were to understand at all. Jenny Hawner let her hand slide to Edison's shoulder as they talked. Paula Plana began using common words she'd learned from him: razor, volcano, visible. Melissa Reed returned from a wedding trip (apparently to her partner in Boulder) with four new swimsuits and a noticeable hair loss.

THEN, SUNDAY, IT WAS LATE IN AN AFTERNOON, DRIFTING from the beachside before a only in small that, as Edison swept the pool patio and washed the deck chairs and cleaned the grill, he knew summer was, in some way over. But he wanted the carriage there in his yard, the broom, the hose, the bucket of nails, the sun a steady presence, and as he wiped the tables and squeezed the furniture, he thought: No wonder Scott and Dan and Allen like this. The pool was clean, a diamond blue, and there wasn't a crumb on the deck. Edison wandered around another half hour, and then he put his teeth away with great care.

That evening, the women did a slow dance around him. He took it as a unified push and pull, he watched the children in the pool, their groupings and regroupings, and then he'd have a new cold beer in his hand, talking again to Scott Plana about chlorine. He sat in the circle of his friends on folding chairs in the reflected swimming pool light, with Paula or Jenny right behind him, his arm against his shoulder, and he held everyone's attention now, disarming with his hands-out in the air as he began to let the children choose who got to sit in the front seat. "I'll call this Thursday," he said, lifting his thumb from each face, one then the other. Edison wasn't the different children and how they played the game, and who had gotten to sit in the front seat today and how. His hands worked like two poppers. Behind the women laughed, the men smiled, and Jenny pulled Edison's empty beer bottle out of his hands and replaced it with a full one.

"It's too much," Dan Hawner said. "This is a hell of a moment for you. I'll be glad when you get this spec project

done and get over to give us a hand in apprehensions." He leaned forward and made his hands into a ring, fingers up to fingers. "We've got engine trouble."

"Not just the lounge, the whole scepter." Allen lifted interrupted. "And the radial displacement and making him a huge window, anything we want. We've got clear black, Ed."

"Tending? You'd be good on that team," Dan Hawner said. "Sober." Allen Reed said, tapping Edison's hair back with his own. "For a."

Wrapped in a towel like a little chafers, they walked up and leaned between his father's legs for a moment, his wet hair swept on Edison's face. Then he called his sister's name solidly and set back to play.

"Right." Edison did not know what to say. He picked up. They were towel in both hands and looked at the men.

Later, as the party was breaking up and the friends clustered at the gate, Dan Hawner said, "It's a relief to have you joining the real world," and Allen Reed clamped his arm around Edison and said, "It's been a good run. You're a hell of a guy."

Michael Reed took his upper arm against her new bosom and said, "Don't listen to him, Edison. He says that because you saved him of what he was like ten years ago." She squeezed his arm and kissed him on the lips, but his face had fallen.

THAT NIGHT, AFTER EVERYONE HAD LEFT EDISON WALKED around and distracted while they cleaned up. He stood outside Leslie around the deck and through the house, and, at some point, he dumped a load of towels in the laundry room and continued on into his room. After Leslie had closed the porch, blown out all the candle lanterns, and squeezed the kitchen away, she found Edison at his desk. She stood in the doorway for a minute, but he was rapt on his calculations.

He was there through the night, working as he was in the morning and all the long afternoon. He scripted a turn sandwich about midday. The brand him asleep at 9:30 p.m. his face on the large sheet of paper, surrounded by his annotated figures and the rubs of six pencils.

She helped him into bed, where he woke at midnight with a tiny snore that opened Leslie's eyes. "Coverings," she said. His voice was rocky and uneven. "I went back in. I walked all the way over the low hills, and I climbed up and back over and into the woods—I found the same woods—and I gathered most of the little people. They're like children, I mean, some, unless they follow and so now I think I'm headed the right way." He sighed heavily and she could hear the finger in his chest.

"Get some sleep."

He was whispering, "I don't have them all, and I see now they're part of it. I'm not sure you ever get them all. These are moments beyond these. I didn't even know about."

Leslie lay still. He knew she was awake.

"But that's for another time. Now I can keep these gaps to gather and come down. Do you see? I can wrap this up." She was alone, as he added, "There wasn't any tears."

"Stop," he said quietly. "You don't want that game."

"I took all night, but I was able to find them because I knew you were working." Leslie could hear the ghost of the old children in his voice.

"Edison," she said, taking his hand. "I'm not there. You need to understand that I'm not in the [continued on page 137]



Photograph by
Nitin Vadukul

John McCain Walks on Water

By
Charles
P. Pierce

Is the Arizona senator a virtuous man or a man who uses virtue for his own ends? And in Washington these days, can anyone tell the difference?

The desert ends to the mountains and the mountains look like broken things. It is said that the Dutchman once found gold here. Every few weeks, he would ride down into town, dusting the loots with nuggets by the fistful. Then the Dutchman died without leaving heirs or maps. A century later, people still make their way up from the desert through the ancient, narrow streets in search of the Dutchman's lost treasure. They wind their way through the narrow paths to the high places, passing to gold the dazzling air, gazing up at the shattered peaks like wandering biblical persons searching for an invisible God. They have faith in lost fortunes, following dusty hope up from the desert and into these



mountains that cut the dry blue old horses into a haze

"So," John McCain says, "what should I say?"

He's drawing into the Superstition Mountains, where he will meet some filmmakers from ABC's who are finishing up a documentary on the old Dutchman and his last years. Now the senior senator from Arizona, McCain once helped push through legislation that designated a great stretch of these mountains as a wilderness area. The ABC people want him to talk freely about that. That's not what's bothering him, though. It's the other thing that has been accepted.

"I mean it," he means "What are I supposed to say about something like that?"

Early that morning, before the sun had risen above the peaks, there was a report that a former White House intern named Monica Lewinsky had been surprisingly sued by a friend of hers named Linda Tripp at the behest of independent counsel Kenneth Starr. It had been reported that Lewinsky had confessed to a sexual relationship with President Bill Clinton and that she had said that Clinton tried to get her to do what it under oath. Now as McCain drives through the Arizona desert, Washington, D.C., has begun to lose its mind.

This cannot be good for the country," McCain says in his C-SPAN voice, low and thick with import—serious but not grave, with just enough of the civility cast to it that one's mind begins to drift a bit out into the desert. "I remember, after Watergate, how long it took for people to have a high opinion of the institution of government again," he continues. "If this should turn out to be true, it can be good for the view that Americans will hold of their government."

That enough Americans hold many views of their government. The view from between the president's knees likely had never occurred to them until this morning.

As we run toward the mountains, McCain's car is alive with the chirping of cellular telephones—the plume-like cloud of media politics at finding time. The newscasts are after him. Various pundits are apppe. By any standard, McCain has become a star in that increasingly diffuse environment in which politics is conducted with modern publicity. His national profile has been higher. His influence—particularly among the nation's chattering classes—is more noticeably powerful. He sends Don Imus into stammering lameness, and he sends Tim Russert into a juddle on the floor. During the 1996 campaign, when McCain was Bob Dole's most effective surrogate, Michael Lewes of *The New Republic* wrote about McCain more

repeatedly than he'd once written about his second wife's divorce. McCain is almost universally respected in a culture that is so on the particular momentous respect about nothing.

"So," he says, turning to me, "what do you think I should say?"

Then Lewes pines up in Massachusetts with an Irish cop for one grandfather and an Irish political operative for another and a bit of an inherited gift for political chemistry country of both, I am finding a bit out of my depth here. I am not prepared to tell a United States senator what his public position should be on the question of whether the president of the United States has been shipping the hard hat. "I think I should say that there are only allegiances," means McCain, answering his own question. "And that, like anybody else, the president is owed the presumption of innocence."

Rehearsal. Tell him that "presumption of innocence" is a word that a very useful phrase. He spends much of the rest of the ride tooting a tune into the screaming may back in Washington, and a stanza to work quite well. He has a gift—his aside that he would find it comfortable to advise for getting people to resolve themselves with him.

With this gift, John McCain has carved out a unique place in the politics of his time. The nascent opinion makers have come to regard him as more than simply a reliable source of unfettered commentary (thus are falling off barrels all over Washington). Instead, they look to him as a source of moral wisdom. He has gathered a national constituency to whom politics seems almost beside the point, in part because of his own. His moral authority comes from an undigested lump of American history to which McCain is inescapably bound. "John's experience in Vietnam is always there," says one of his staffers.

It's the gun on the table in the line at the play." We all have our Vietnam stories—all of us who, as McCain put it, are in our decade years. In 1970, as a navy pilot, he was shot down over North Vietnam. He was taken prisoner and held for five and a half years. He was beaten and tortured. He refused an offer of early release and, for that, he was beaten and tortured more severely. Eventually, he agreed to a conditional release against the Vietnamese people. At about the same time, my father started wearing his Navy Reserve uniform too late of fate. They were drafting the hell out of the ghetto high school where he taught. My father would come home and bring off his uniform as if it were something odd that had fallen on him. Also around that time, a good man I came to know

went off to Vietnam. Fourteen years later, he took a wife into the desert and shot himself to death. I went to his funeral. I prayed for the nameless dead.

Then it was I began to hate it again—as facile and criminal an enterprise on that winter's day as it had been in 1970 when McCain was shot down, as it was in 1975, when he was released, as it is today, when a generation comes to McCain for a kind of education for what was once a perfectly defensible moral position. Nevertheless, support for him increasingly sounds like a ceremony of capitulation and, ultimately, an act of faith. He is becoming an icon and he is still dead and nobody—least of all a politician who expects to get anything done—desires that burden.

"Nowadays," he says, "when somebody introduces me like, 'There is our great war hero, I don't like it. I want to be known as the guy who's trying to reform the telecommunications business, who's trying to set the cable rates decapitated.' I mean, Jesus, it can make your skin crawl."

And yet, and yet, the war keeps coming up. The gun on the table goes off. To argue with him about military policy—no, for that matter, about cable deregulation or about dairy prices on the Internet—is not merely to argue with a former navy pilot, it is to argue with a former navy pilot who suffered the terrors of the damned during a war that those arguing with him may have ridden out on an ROTC deal or a bad loan, in Canada or in the National Guard, keeping Indianapolis safe from the Vietnam. The gun on the table keeps going off, and McCain doesn't even have to pick it up. Other people pick it for themselves. As he writes in McCain is convinced to be, his own words are never simple. Honor for me, it has many sides. It can double back on itself. Consider John McCain came back from Vietnam in 1971 to a wife crippled in a car accident who waited for him over the previous six years. He screwed around on his faithful disabled wife alone from the time he got home. He cut loose the faithful disabled wife in favor of a younger woman the daughter of an Arizona horse magnate. He moved to Arizona, where he shopped for a congressional district. His new wife was later caught taking prescription drugs intended for poor children in order to feed her own habit. McCain was elected to the House of Representatives. He was elected to the Senate. His campaigns were financed by an Arizona savings and loan bundle who was literally looting widows' pensions. McCain once vacationed at the state's private Caribbean resort. He attended a meeting with four other senators at which federal regulators were pressured to leave the man alone. McCain was lauded before the Senate Ethics Committee and stepped on the writ, and now he's the most enthusiastic leader of an effort to pull down the system within which Charles Keating once felt comfortable taking John McCain on vacation.

McCain doesn't run from this past. No, he has addressed every part of his biography, which a considerably risky in an age in which we earnestly delude the national consciousness of a president's blots. He has dared people to call him a womanizer and a carpephage. He has left himself open to being

branded an ambrosian that he's back who doesn't even have the essential country to stay bought. He doesn't even have to be asked about it. It comes up in conversation. His voice goes deeper than that the C-SPAN voice but darker, with new edges to it.

"One of the reasons I've been reluctant to judge other people is that I've had so many failures of my own," he says. "I failed when I was to prison. I failed in my [first] marriage. I think that if there are any failures from my failure, it is to realize that other people fail, too."

The house has to be dug out, a bit at a time, like gold from the earth. The people who come to him say that his conviction changes the acts themselves, possibly because their own misbegotten guilt drives them to stroke similar bargains. He can be stiff-necked and imprudent to his fellow senators, and yet he locates himself to relieve strangers. This may simply be slick politics. Honesty—especially emotional honesty—plays very well these days, and McCain not only feels your pain, he seems to be more than willing to let you find his. The problem with that surely cynical assessment is that there is something authentic about McCain that touches people that it dissolves the conventional political alignments completely off plan.

We have spent the morning together. He began at an elementary school, where McCain read a book called *My Grandfather's Army* to a panel of schoolchildren while his daughter, Meghan, sat huddled in an armchair, a kid in front of other kids. He was smaller (and I thought he would be). I expected a robust old fighter pilot. Instead, I noticed that he did not hold the book straight out to read it, but rather his arm came around from the side, describing a rough circle. When McCain was shot down, he broke both his arms. While he was being interrogated in prison, the guards crushed his damaged arms behind his back for hours at a time. He cannot reach straight out for things. His hands are in a right hook. I watched him hold the book in that odd, pretheatrical way his shoulders turned. He looked uncharacteristically fragile.

He draws the car that same way—closes out, shifts in both shoulder joints. We drove up from the desert and into the abandoned mountains that cut the dry like scars on fingers wounds, like old bones set in stone. McCain is still talking to people in Washington about allegiances and the presumption of innocence. I am not listening. I am watching him drive. A boy had asked him that morning whether he had any hobbies.

"I like to hike, and I like to ride," McCain had said, his voice falling away through the C-SPAN register and in his whisper and swift over the bustling of the children. "I can't do some of the things that I like to do because I have some injuries from when I was in the Vietnam War."

"Maybe one day I'll come back and tell you about that."

He must run for president now. He's the fervent, unswerving proponent of a hounded Washington grandstanding disavowed with the strongest design against between the Democratic networks and a Republican field that looks increasingly like a test track for Duane Wadley's monomane Hall of Presidents. (H. H. President Pat Buchanan, Wikileaks to the



McCain and Tripp stand at a line in March in October 1970 and Tripp married him. A photo taken more than five years later.

with Senator John Kerry—who first became nationally prominent as a Vietnam veteran against the war—to devise a new political party toward Vietnam that wasn't so radically punitive as the one our country had previously been pursuing.

He began working for a normalization of relations with Hanoi. As a member of the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, he faced the wrath of the very vocal people who believe that there are still three hundred or five hundred or fifteen hundred American servicemen imprisoned there. He was accused of being the "Mushroom Candidate" because of the confusion he'd had stirred out of him. The committee met for a year and a half, patiently sifting all but a sad handful of cases. Ultimately, on July 1, 1995, President Clinton announced the normalization of relations with Vietnam. John McCain hugged him.

Whether he's easily tempted to use it or not, his life informs everything he does. It makes his arguments sharper, his temper more formidable. His is a life that is real. It has a substance and a history to it that become obvious every time Mc-

McCain reaches around in that odd, broken way to sign his name. We live in a spectacularly violent, a spectacularly abundant, and often they live in fear of them that are fabulous for them—and usually for good reason. It is a state of mind that is a conflict between opposite positions or conflicting issues fought along critical lines by protagonists. McCain did not leave his life behind on the terms in the Philippines. The people who come to McCain come looking for something authentic—and if he uses that life to political advantage, the past as theater to the present, then at least it is there to be used.

"I watched that Clinton speech, when they went back to the states, and McCain comes out, right?" says Tim Willey, a Vietnam veteran, friend of McCain's, and former Massachusetts Democratic state representative who's worked on several development projects in Vietnam that McCain has supported. "There's that old woman there, and she might be eighty or she might be eight hundred. And McCain goes up and he gives her a rose. That's why he's amazing. He doesn't fit in with all the guys they have over there who have to be tough guys in public. I mean, Chris, what's Pat Buchanan going to say to John McCain?"

But it's his enemies, John's not his friends. I don't think he's more intuitive, because he has no political fear. It's this little act of humanity. Why does he give the old lady that rose?"

It is the dead of winter on the Mall. Old ladies dance in tiny odd shoes against the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A light crowd is in the twilight. Two men in camouflage, closely crouched. Two teenage boys, heads dropped, hurrying ahead of their grandparents, who have stopped and are whispering. Like difficult but faithful phantoms, the boys' reflections scurry along beside them across the black granite of the wall. I walk along in the wrong direction, from right backward, along the way to reverse. There are very few names, and then a lot of names, and then very few names again. There are a great many names on those panels representing the years that John McCain was in prison.

A few yards away from the entrance to the memorial, there is a stark cement in the head of the Believing Pool. It is called the Last Firebase, and it is run by those people who finally be-

lieve that there are still American servicemen held in Vietnam.

I fall into conversation with a fellow named Jim Rapps, who is on duty at a small nearby "We Call Home the Representative from Hanoi," Rapps tells me. "You know he made propaganda headlines for the money don't you?" No, sir, I tell him I did not know that. Probably because it never happened.

"Yes, sir," Rapps continues. "He made thirty odd broadcast spots, as a matter of fact. His attitude is honesty for John McCain and fuck everybody else. Tell you what, I feel anger at him that I do in this person in the White House right now. At least he isn't a hypocrite."

A young couple comes up to Rapps' table still, so he excuses himself. A chilly breeze blows his people's around, and it sits the leaves off the desert down the walkway under all those names carved onto all that black granite. The wall is a monument to the human cost of the war, to the blood and death of the Americans involved in it, anyway. The Last Firebase has a role to play here, too. It stands for lost and disappointment, for arrogant, narrow and vulgar cynicism, for angry fantasy and bloody delusions. Then, between the wall and the Last Firebase, McCain is more fully remembered than any other war we've ever had. I walk away up the white steps of the memorial to Abraham Lincoln, who once vowed to heal up the nation's wounds, and then somebody shot him.

It has been a bad week for Senator McCain. A federal judge in New York has pointed the lie-scan onto the captain of McCain's early career in Congress. He can't get some Democrats to agree on the language in the Iraq resolution. They keep talking to him about the Gulf of Tonkin, which makes him throw his hands in the air. And, in the new Senate session opens the paragonism in his own party are plotting again to shakedown the McCain-Paul gold bid, but attempts to inform the way we finance our elections. It is all over the speakerphone. He is in and out of the office. He's up and down the halls. He comes very well. He's a hard man to keep up with.

"I'm very aware of the instance of this stuff," he explains. "I'm aware of the consequences of mistakes and of failure. There are many reports out there who have been reading all of these things about me and are thinking 'This guy can't be that good.' He's bound to have some warts on him. He's bound to be hypocritical and phony just like all these other guys. And there will be times when mistakes will be made, but they won't be made because I'm not trying to do the right things. But, in the end, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter."

Over in Arlington, Virginia, the Conservative Political Action Conference is holding its twenty-fifth annual gathering. The money is rolling in. The energy of the conservative movement has gathered to be whipped into a frenzy by aging icons like Jesse Helms and by complex freshmen like Representative Bob Barr, Republican of Georgia, a Jefferson Daybreak-looking lion who demands Clinton's immediate impeachment and denounces him for having debauched the country's moral compass, something that apparently doesn't concern him because of his second marriage and the day he was photographed looking whipped cream off two women's

cheeks. McCain is widely admired here. He also doesn't have two votes in the room.

"John's strengths are obvious," explains David Keene, the president and founder of CBOC. "His weakness is that he's not spent a lot of time networking among the activists and he's created a liability for himself with his position on campaign-finance reform. As well respected as John is, he's doing something to destroy something most people here consider vital to their operation."

Steve Forbes was the CPAC presidential state pick. Texas governor George W. Bush comes in second. Here, at the heart of a movement that first gained momentum by listening to itself on the downmoving bulk of some mythical beast called the Bottom, in a crowd that were wild when Bob Barr told them that the corpse of the beast had gone naked, now and was still poisoning the country, nobody seems for John McCain, who might one day call them money. Even in the most sequestered confines of the Senate, McCain is undermined by his own party for more than he is by the Democrats. Outside in the wider world, he's come to stand for something completely different—an efficient politics of public consensus. The people who have come to him do so because they think they can find something they've lost. It is a perilous thing, this act of faith in a faithless man—perilous for McCain, who still has to put it all at risk in the daily business of being a politician, and perilous for the people who have come to him, who must realize the constant risk that, sometimes, God turns out to be just a thunderstorm, and the gold just rains against us in the sun.

On my last day with McCain, we get to talking about Henry Kissinger, whom the senator admires. "Not for some of the things he did," McCain says. "But for his ability to prevent an entire view of the world in such an articulate way." I am arguing with him. Too many people have died so that the good doctor could be remembered.

"Or Talleyrand," suggests McCain, stilling a goggle. I am beginning to sound pedantic. In fact, I am beginning to sound like a pedant. Washington will do that to you.

"You don't agree," McCain says. No, I tell him. I think Henry Kissinger belongs in whatever Eric Foner has for a spending. McCain has to laugh. His administrative assistant, Mark Salter, comes into the office.

"The Kissinger's on the line," Salter says. "I'll start him your regards," McCain says to me, and the act of a hand is twirling, I know it.

It has been a long couple of weeks since the news broke that the down in Arizona. Now we have talked away most of the last afternoon. Outside, at night falls, I can see the television lights coming up outside the federal courthouses, where they are closing the story that begins in the day McCain went driving up from the desert and into the ruined mountains, the high places where people chase a treasure that may not even have existed. I can see what drove people to him, finally. What makes them want to take what faith they have left and hand it to him. It is at least that strange fragility that surrounds him—that sense of the effort it takes to hold himself together in all the broken places.

"I comply and I get upset and I get really tired," McCain says. "But I really have had a wonderful life, and, you know, I know it's not going to last. I know it. The reason that I work so hard is that I know it's not going to last."

"I'm seventy years old. Today my knee is killing me, and my shoulders are killing me. I've seen so many people die, seen so many people where things were going just great and then something happened. I mean, I'm not a fascist. I get that you should make use of every minute, and that doesn't mean just work. I drive the kids crazy when I'm on vacation. They call it Camp McCain."

The last call of the day comes from his young son back



home in Arizona. McCain takes it on the speakerphone so that he can pace around behind his desk, and I use the foggy eyes, as though he could break apart along the old habit lines of himself. Almost everyone who comes to him gives him something to carry—bonnets with their neighborhood patch over a neighborhood war or conservatism who are particularly willing to lose him until he starts to cost them money, or witness not yet remembered to what the war did to them—the strange baggage of a strange time, most of which he missed. As he talks McCain reaches for something on his desk. His arms come around from the side again, like the beginning of an embrace. Outside, the stars have begun to show through the fragile old trees.

"Be sweet," John McCain tells his boy. "Be sweet. Be sweet. Be sweet." ■

The Overnight

IT'S AN IMPORTANT BUSINESS MEETING, OR MAYBE A CHANCE TO PLAY THE BLUE MONSTER, WITH DINNER AFTERWARD. OR IT COULD BE JUST A WARRIOR'S WEEKEND ON YOUR BUDDY'S BOAT. THREE VERY DIFFERENT DAYS AWAY. THIS IS WHAT YOU PACK.

Your standard-issue
Minister of the Universe
uniform. CLOCKWISE
FROM LEFT: Three-button
single-breasted three-
piece wool suit (\$2,785) by
Giorgio Armani Classics.
Vero-Armani sunglasses
(\$195) by Calvin Klein.
Pattern-Armani-motif
sleeves (\$226) by Carter &
Unico. Iron-on travel alarm
clock (\$114) by Tilling &
Co. Black leather dress belt
(\$145) by CK Accessorize.
White linen pocket square
(\$140) by West of Cielo by
Robert Talbot. White cot-
ton shirt (\$500) by Giorgio
Armani-Classico. Sterling
silver and titanium cuff
links (\$245) by Suzanne
Perron. White stretch-cot-
ton boxer shorts (\$52) by
Polo Ralph Lauren. Black
cotton socks (\$60) by
Calvin Klein. Black leather
jane oxs (\$95) by
A. Testoni. Black leather
belt (\$145) by Giorgio
Armani. Oval (\$95) and
square (\$55) polished-
stainless-steel cuff links
by U.S. Ltd. Stainless-steel
watch (\$85) and black
cotton socks (\$20) by
Calvin Klein. White cotton-
nyl dress shirt (\$185) by
Turnbull & Azzer. Purple
silk tie (\$50) by Butterflies.
Green silk tie (\$155) by
West of Cielo by Robert
Talbot. White stretch-cot-
ton T-shirt (\$25) by Polo
Ralph Lauren. Black
canvas suitcase (\$800)
by Gucci.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL MUNDY

YOU CAN HIT THE LINKS LOOKING LIKE A LOSER, OR YOU CAN OPT FOR LOOSE SOPHISTICATION WITH CARGO-POCKET PANTS AND A LIGHTWEIGHT PULLOVER. THE SPORT COAT, OF COURSE, MAKES A MAN ELEGANT AFTER THE EIGHTEENTH.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Nylon golf bag with leather trim (\$3,250) by Prada. Leather golf shoes (\$290) by Nike. Navy silk link tie (\$65) by Valentino. Short-sleeved two-button single-breasted cotton sport coat (\$750) by Calvin Klein. White cotton shirt (\$40) by CK Calvin Klein. Brown leather belt (\$275) by 2 in. waistband. Gray cotton cargo pocket

shorts (\$210) by Isoborg. Olive nylon polo shirt (\$90) by CK Calvin Klein. Nylon cargo pants with leather trim (\$450) by Prada. Tan cotton hat (\$10) by Burberry. Plastic frame sunglasses (\$230) by Cartier & Co. Cotton socks (\$5) by Nike. Green cotton trousers (\$245) by Calvin Klein. Brown leather belt (\$125) by CK Accessories. Brown

leather belt with (\$295) by To Boot New York. Adam Denick. Woven leather sunglasses (\$145) by Ray Ban. By Rowan & Leno. Black cotton boxer briefs (\$24) by Calvin Klein. Akumare motor (\$25) and stainless-steel watch (\$370) by Emporio Armani. Charcoal cashmere and silk turtleneck (\$475) by Donna Karan Collection. Navy and-tan herringbone cotton socks

by Polo Ralph Lauren. Black nylon cashmere with leather trim (\$190) by Prada. Blue-and-white-striped cotton shirt (\$190) by Thomas Pink. Single-zip-front canvas-nylon jacket (\$225) by Armani. Tan cashmere-and-silk sweater (\$175) by Dreyfuss. Black cotton polo shirt (\$290) by Gucci. White cotton boxer briefs (\$22) by Emporio Armani.

PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE ISLAND HOTEL, MAUI

diff: dress, white cotton
T-shirt (\$27) and blue
cotton sweatpants
(\$30) by Polo Sport.
QUICKWESE FROM LEFT:
Rog's blue-and-black
nylon dogp kit (\$45) by
dogp & nam; button-fly
denim jeans (\$54) by
Cotton Black cotton
men's shirt (\$24) by
dogp & nam; Terry cloth
hooded sweat (\$20) by
dogp & nam; by David Cole
flannel on T-shirt (\$30)
by Polo Sport; black
nylon jacket bag (\$120)
by South of the Border
Wilder; capomano-cotton
jacket (\$112) by Polo
Sport; blue nylon cap
(\$10) by Hiltiger Apparel.
Photo: Bruce Compagno
STYLING by Vincent Ward
Shooter Ray (5/07)
Jewelry: silver trunks
chain by Jeweler by David
Cole; white cotton towel
(\$10) by Hiltiger Apparel.
Photo: Bruce Compagno
and page 107

**THE ACTIVE
MAN'S
ESSENTIALS:
SWIM TRUNKS
FOR THE
SOUP, JEANS
FOR THE
WATERSIDE,
AND A JACKET
FOR WHEN
THE COOL
WIND AND
A COUPLE
OF BEERS
HAVE TAKEN
THEIR TOLL.**

BY SCOTT RAAB

The Face of Baseball

If you're gonna love America's pastime, you're gonna have to learn to love Paul Assenmacher

Photograph by Brad Wilson

On August 16, 1961, on a muggy, grey afternoon at the Polo Grounds in New York City, the Cleveland Indians opened a home game series with the Yankees. The Tribe was slumping, in first place but barely ahead of the White Sox and the Yanks. Biding the elevated train from their hotel to the ballpark, the players sat silent, until shortstop Ray Chapman began singing "Dear Old Fol of Mine." One by one, the whole team joined in. They arrived at the park loose, laughing.

Chapman was twenty-nine, a pig-tailed lad from Beaver Dam, Kentucky, who still kept his United Mine Workers card on his wallet after eight seasons in the major leagues. He looked like a pompous Kevin Costner and played like a dervish. Back when the typical major-league pitching staff consisted of five or six men and a good starter completed two of every three games, when an average year had twenty home runs during an entire season and when games were won with speed and defense, Chapman was a superb burner, a flashy fielder, and a fleet, daring base runner.



The kid was no shoo-in back-when his yearly salary jumped to \$150,000 in 1996, he played on six teams and handmade suits—but in an era of crooked games, sharpened spikes, and team owners whose cruelty and greed make George Steinbrenner seem like the Duke of Marlborough, Ray Chapman was baseball's Billy Budd, a call to arms to all us 'Chaps: "When he wasn't being, he whined."

The Tribe was up 3-0 when Chapman fell off the fifth inning against Carl Mays, the Yankees ace. Lashed over by his own teammates, Mays was a sailing jack whose knuckle-scraping, underhand delivery—sportsmen called him "Bolt"—often sent a vicious fastball racing at batters' heads, especially if, like Chapman, they crowded the plate and liked to leave. Mays's first pitch of the fifth strike Chapman's left temple with such force that, hearing the *thunk*, Mays thought Chapman had batted, he fished the ball bouncing back to ward him and threw to first for the out.

Chapman lay in home plate, his skull crushed. A few minutes later, flanked by teammates, he began walking to the clubhouse in another field. At second base, Chapman crumpled.

Back in Cleveland, Chapman's wife was pregnant with their first child. Her father, who was president of the Erie, Ohio Co-Operative had taken Ray to town because of the brawl, room and a sealed file. "I want to help give the Cleveland fans the first pennant Cleveland has ever won," Chapman is quoted as saying in Mike Rowland's fine book *The Pitch That Killed*. "Then I will take Mays."

At 4:40 a.m. on August 25, 1920, Ray Chapman died. When his body was brought home, two thousand people filled St. John's Roman Catholic Cathedral for the memorial service; about thousand more stood outside. Chapman was buried in a crypt in St. John's Cemetery beneath a broad, pale limestone marker only with his name and the dates of his birth and death. It was purchased with nickels and dimes donated by Indians fans.

The Indians, with black armbands on their sleeves, held on to take the pennant and won the 1920 World Series. They were a race, and, last, in 1920.

When I hear the meaning of a *Clebe* or a Red Sox fan, those anti-apostrophed names of a livable being, or a Yankee fan whisper about how Don Mattingly belongs in Cooperstown for having had no good years and a bad back, I want to grab him by the throat and drag him to Chapman's grave.

Paul Asenmacher. Two words that may explain once what baseball is today and why many intelligent and reasonable folks find it so filthy more lively. I can't say precisely when the sport became a home-run derby played in latex-rimmed helmets filled with cramplap, top-forty Muzak and Aerosmith-class female screeching. Alaska in their gleaming corporate logos, or how the game morphed into a four-hour death match between two managers using a dozen leaders, rubber-stained relief pitchers as pawns. What I know is that Paul Asenmacher has pitched in 30 games since far this decade—more than any other leader in the major leagues.

"Why the hell you wanna write about me?" he asks. "Why? Because Ray Chapman's dead and Amy's the son, because Ray Chapman is mine and the game and the season—a

boy's nose bleed, the prayers of a city—now hang on the second left arm of a snow-may with a motor made right. Because Ray Chapman was laid in the cold, cold ground at twenty-nine and Paul Asenmacher at thirty-seven makes \$4.1 million per year for pitching forty innings. Because Chapman died, my Chief Whiteo—a giant grinning, black bearded, bearded bearded, the ugly caricature of a native people decorated by genocide—lies on, snows into the ground of Paul Asenmacher's cap and the slaver of his jersey, passed on every bumper and shopkeeper in Cleveland, tattooed inside the crook of my left arm.

"There you go, Paul." Asenmacher—placed, slightly good-natured—says when I roll up my sleeve to reveal Chief Whiteo. We're at the Baseball Center in Alpharetta, Georgia, owned and operated by Kyle Reese, Asenmacher's roommate with the Gulf Coast League in 1976. Reese, quiet and chunky, topped out in the majors and spent a few seasons as a ball pit catcher for the Kansas City Royals. Neither man has ever heard of Ray Chapman.

My hope, on this cold February morning is to stand in the left-handed batter's box and face Asenmacher, to sample the goods that have made him such a staple of ages baseball. When Cleveland signed him as a free agent in '96, he'd already traded through nine companies, nondescript seasons with the Braves, Cubs, Yankees, and White Sox, mainly as a middle-relief reliever. The Indians needed a sub-subsequent, a one-man bench equal sent in to face a potent left-handed hitter or two in the seventh or eighth inning of a close game, armed with a nasty curveball and a low-key, nearly repulsive temperament. Paul Asenmacher took the bait.

His workout clothes are baggy and mismatched, his fielder's glove—with its full name stamped in black along the thumb by the manufacturer—poor. He says he lifts weights three times a week during the off-season, "I'm no sign of it. He is big—six feet three inches, 250 pounds—but even in uniform and on the field, he barely resembles a professional athlete. He shruggles in from the ball cap, pucker in hand, head down, sloped shoulders rolling, noisily belated, apple-banana-don't-careen back. Over a weakish chin, he sports a sparse salt-and-pepper beard that appears to be faded after *Baseball*. Peering in for the sign with wild eyes, eyelids and lips parted slightly, he could not come a Cub Scout.

I join a bullpen down over my head and grab a Little League-sized aluminum bat. But there's a problem. Amy's not ready to throw the curve, his head-on-head, the pitch that shoots toward the batter's head, then dives across the plate and downward. Asenmacher without the curveball is like Dave Barry without the 44. But he is a slammer.

"I don't want to jump the gun too soon," he says. "I have five weeks of spring training. I don't want to be ready for the season in the middle of March. I want to be ready for the season by the end of March. I don't need six weeks to get ready to pitch one inning."

So he pops fastballs. His velocity—maybe eighty-five miles per hour on a good day—below the major-league average, and he's hardly straining himself now, but the ball

—bounces in a breeze his hand and smacks Reese's mitt before I even blink. My knees involuntarily buckle, and my back leg twitches toward safety.

"We got a buster," Reese shouts gleefully behind me.

There's nothing deceptive or unusual about Asenmacher's motion. His head rocks back, his duck snout pouts and thrusts, his left arm arcs forward, and the catcher's mitt booms. The baseball darts his hand at the same angle every time, and his foot foot lands in the same spot on the dirt. Each pitch leaves the outside corner Reese barely moves his hand to catch the ball.

For my own safety I don't crowd the plate or swing the bat, but when he starts flooring change-ups, I inch in, closing my stance. With each flatter, my front foot steps toward Asenmacher as his arm arcs forward. My front elbow twitches with the effort to hold back. I've almost got him timed when he shouts, "The through."

"I'm just getting comfortable." I shoot back.

"I've done," he says.

He has thrown no more than fifty pitches and looks like a man who has just woken up.

In Paul Asenmacher's dreams, he isn't Randy Johnson or Roger Clemens or even Terry Lofgren. Entering his thirtieth season in the bigs, he's not drier of baseball at all, can't recall the last time he did. It's a job.

On game day, he gets to the park early, has a noah from the buffet table, plays cribbage, stretches, checks out the first inning or two on the clubhouse television, then strolls down to the ball pen with the rest of the relievers and waits for the phone to ring.

"You just arrive and start to get old and you're left-handed, so you become a special unit." He shrugs. "I'm just playing. I didn't put any pressure on myself. I once expected much from me anyway. I just want out there and tried to do the best I could, and things just kept working out for me."

But how do you do it? Fast scrawny, nervous old, tough, bitter, close game, hero or goat?

"I'm just a laid-back person. I've always been like that, even in high school and college. I'm lucky."

His high school coach in Michigan helped him land a scholarship at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids. "Nobody seemed to want him," says the coach, "because he didn't throw hard enough." Asenmacher went right with a 10 ERA in college, and, nobody seemed him. Undrafted, he pitched for a local semipro team until an Atlanta scout saw him and signed him in '93, back when the Braves zucked Asenmacher spent three seasons in the bushes, the first as a starting pitcher. He won 6-4, with an ERA of 4.06 in Class A—hardly a promising debut, but he had a big curveball, an unlikely pitch, and a durable arm.

"Use that, my little ball pen," Asenmacher explains.

"I found my curve early."

And any day.

Championship Series on October 6, 1995, three nine pitches, and launched the Indians into their first World Series in forty-four years.

With Seattle running on first and third and one out in the seventh, with Cleveland ahead 3-0 and sweet-swinging Jarrett Lyle flowing his black bat, with forty thousand Tribe fans stamping and screaming, *Amy*, like a hawk, never blinks. Junior stood and watched as the first sweet curve dropped just outside. He missed the second as it ticked the corner strike one. Then the fastball—fit, dangling leathery high—but Griffey, still sitting on the curve, looked up, strike two. Now Griffey knew the curve was coming, knew that he could jump on that hook and still crush that Class A throw in the improbable event that Asenmacher owned the stones to throw his fastball again. Amy did—a left hander and a rise higher—and Griffey didn't jump, coming out of his Nike's, waving and missed, strike three.

The median throbs, pulsing with joy, then quiet, waiting for the next move. Jay Baker, a right-handed power house, is up, his elbows cut high to show off his grapefruit arms. As Asenmacher moves his cap and drops an arm across his brow. This is the Indians' water-gate coming out to the mound to shut this season. Don't get Baker anything to rob, that's a flycatcher's rest. Any rods. You can almost see his gills wobble.

Stranded and goated, young Tullner fishes a *blat*'s glove at his face the mound, clenching the bat and glaring

in his own for Asenmacher to unravel. The crowd rages to its feet, screaming again.

He shows Baker one fastball, no longer he can reach, then snaps off three yodels during the end and out, none above the fence. Asenmacher sees Baker's legs in the last, and now, with the count

two-and-two, he knows, knows that Baker's heart is discharging like a midget's, knows that he can put him away now. Amy feels him the next night: high and hard, low-breaking. Bobnar's head, with eyes bulging, pulls off the ball as his lips race and the ball hops over his lining bat.

The game has two innings to go, the series another game, but for these four-five of years are old enough to have watched the Indians play a night meaningful game—batter's eye split wide. They brag, shake their arms and ads with *cutty* and sell off Asenmacher trunks, head down, from the mound. His teammates greet him in the dugout with high-fives and high fives. He looks like a man who has just woken up.

"That," he says now, pondering the memory, "was probably the biggest moment in my career. Taking everything into account—Cleveland, first game getting that far for a long time, everyone going crazy, guys like Griffey Baker. That kind of goes your adrenaline flowing."

The 1995 Indians were on to face the World Series in six games to the Atlanta Braves. In 1995, Asenmacher set a major-league record by appearing in fourteen postseason games, pitching a whopping total of nine innings. Cleveland was up in the bottom of the sixth inning of the seventh game of the World Series against the Marlins, two outs from victory, when the baseball gods unleashed their wrath. *Amy*.

"I told myself the next day," he [continued on page 116]



It was
a two-
ounce
songbird.
A lemon-
sized
tumor. An
imperial
appetite
for death,
flesh,
and the
immortal
gesture.
It was
time for
dinner.

By Michael
Paterniti

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE LAST MEAL, I WISE A STONE church where mass is being said. In the back row, a scarred boy sits with his mother, his head tilted heavenward, watching, in an unfocused way, the trapped birds that flutter and spin in the boughs of the church vault. About a hundred yards away, in the unseen holy hanger, talon blooms on the altar. It's the end of December—gray has fallen over Paris—and the nupts are kindred, gathered, in four voices, two to a suite. A priest stands among them and raises his arms as if to fly.

Last I remember, I was on a plane, in a cab, in a hotel room—fluffy, jet-lagged, smoozing. Then, by some Oups force, some coincidence of foot on cobblestone, I came to a huge wrought-iron door. What brought me to France in the first place was a story I'd heard about François Mitterrand, the former French president, who two years ago had gorged himself on a magnificent feast before he'd died. For his last meal, he'd eaten oysters and fine gas and capon—all in the his quarters—the macabre, wailing, over the flood- ing his good mouth. And then there was the meal's climactic moment: a small, yellow-throated songbird that was de-



THE STRANGE CULINARY FORBIDDEN BY LEW AT MOUNCE, EATING THE VERY CRISP-FINISH LONG INVOLVED ELABORATE RITUAL—INCLUDING HOLDING THE BIRD CAPTIVE IN THE DARK FOR WEEKS BEFORE COOKING AND CONSUMING IT UNDER THE SHIELD OF A WHITE CLOTH

gal) to eat. Rice and anchovies, the bird-oriental—supposedly represented the French soul. And this old man, this venerable president, had eaten it whole—wings, feet, bones, heart. Swallowed it, bones and all. Consumed it beneath a white cloth so that God Himself couldn't witness the barbaric act.

I wondered then what a soul might taste like. Now I find myself wandering among clusters of anemone, all of them lined in pews, their repetitive heads bent like senses bent. When the priest's quavery monotone comes from a stately speaker, cutting the damp cold, it is full of metaphors and birds.

Somewhere, a long time ago, religion let me down. And somewhere, on this night before the last meal, before I don a white hood, I've ended up here, reliving the Last Meal, pausing my hand unconsciously from my forehead to my heart to either shoulder—no—yes, automatically paantomimizing the paramecium of blessing myself.

Why? When it comes time for communion, why do I find myself floating up the aisle? Why, after more than a decade, do I offer my tongue with the joy of a haggard dog and accept His supposed blood, the rainbow sugar water, from the priest's touched, hairy finger? Why do I sip His supposed blood, the sure blood that leaves a psycholic stain on the white cloth that the priest uses to wipe my lip? Why am I suddenly this pithy Christ crumbal?

At the end of mass, the priest raises his arms again—and the roomed boy suddenly runs his too, and we are released. Then I find the hood again. I lie awake until dawn. Fighting down my hunger.

That's what I do the night before the last meal.

On his last days, the president imagined there was a lesson in the past, on bed days, an overripe grapefruit, spilling its juice. He had indicated his affection—cancer—to a problem of cancer. Big citrus and little citrus. The metaphor was suffering, for at least his body was a place where things could cure.

And yet, this passing day saturated more substance, brought up the specter of his devotion against the pale, bluish skin of some month of his waking hours since being hit by the white river that ran through his hemisphere. The purple shadow of the worldlike child-hood, still where he had delivered speeches to a roomful of combatants. He sat, robed and blanketed now, analyzing how great men of ancient civilizations had left the earth, their final gestures in the space between life and death. Seneca and Heraclitus were out as beautiful, omelette-ous-ides, even the conical, luscious Nero fell gloriously on his own sword.

Yes, the gesture was everything. Important to go with dignity, to control your fate, not like the sad poet Aeschylus, who died when an eagle, looking to crack the shell of a tortoise in his back, mistake his bald head for a rock. Or the Chinese poet Li Po, who drowned trying to embrace the full moon on the water's surface. Yes, the gesture was essential. It would be undesirable to go out like a chicken.

So what gesture would man take? The president was a strange, contradictory man. Even at the height of his power, he often seemed luscious and dreamy, more like a shaman than a world leader, with a strong, pupal nose glimmer-

ing, heavy eyes, and sun-like the helix cap of a porobol to mushroom. He soaked himself then watchfully soaked his most devoted lieutenants. He nibbled against the consumption of money, though his fourteen-year reign was shot through with financial scandals. A close friend, caught in the double-sinking, killed himself out of apparent disgust for the president's style of government. "Money and death," the friend wrote and shortly before the end "That's all that transpires here anymore."

And yet in others fell, the president surveyed by tracks of agility and acumen, pure calm charm and winning serenity. Now this last unadorned and killed toward him. He shuffled with a cane, stooped and frosted silver like a gaurled ice, in a wren's place. I took him in country to accomplish the most minor things: buttoning a shirt, buttoning a shirt, buttoning a shirt, buttoning a shirt.

And what would become of the intense hell around? What would become of his citizens? And then his children and grandchildren, his wife and minister? Was this the fate of all aged leaders when they were stripped of their magic, so that the vegetables, stirred dishes, surrounded by photographs and tokens of appreciation, by loneliness and anticlimax?

When he slept, he dreamed of living. When he ate, he ate the foods he would miss. But even then, somewhere in his mind, he began to prepare his ceremony day advance.

I'm going to tell you what happened next—the day of the last meal—for everything during this time in December shaped itself around the question of eating this meal.

That morning, I took up my golftees, Suna, as City agent. I've pressed on her to come, as any soul should around a table—the life lived inside these courses—only as good as the minuscule among people there. Through courses, she's alive with the first adrenaline rush of landing in a new country. But then, as we begin driving southward toward the coast and Bordeaux, the fall has asleep. Its gray and muzzing, and ocean wind sweeps inland and looses the car. The moon has been counted before. Little men in little cars drive by our windows, undoubtedly hearing him of these in their little cars. And then a huge nuclear power plant looms on the horizon, its cooling towers belching thick, muddling clouds over a lake now gaining in a fallow pasture.

There is something in the French countryside, with its flat, anytime light, that demands melancholy. And I wonder what it means to knowingly eat a last meal. It means knowing you're going to die, right? It means that you're



The president Mitterrand was a man of large appetites and bottomless secrets. He had a second, hidden-away family, fervent consultations with astrologers, obsessions with tulip-tipped actresses, and a passion for red wines and oysters.

been living under a long-held delusion that the world is infinite and you are immortal. So it means saying yes to everything, including the delusions that sustain you, at the same time that you've gained a deeper feeling about those delusions and how you might have lived with more passion and love and generosity.

And then the most difficult part. You must imagine yourself as a memory laid out and eaten and no longer yourself, no longer you, the remarkable Someone who ate a last meal. Rather, you're just a body full of that meal. So you have to imagine yourself gone—first as a pale figure in the basement of a funeral home, then as the lead in a eulogy about how remarkable you were, and then as a bunch of photographs and stories.

And that's when you must imagine one more time what you most need to eat, what last meal must run to meet your hunger and thirst and larger wishes on your tongue even as, before dinner, you're lowered into the grave.

It was just before Christmas 1995, the shortest days of the year. The president's dinner slept on the cold floor of the house in Latche while the president slept nearby on his bed, snoring lightly, looked down upon by a photograph of his deceased parents. He was seventy-nine, and the doctor could still feel the fight in him, even as he slept—the thin, beautiful little man punching back. In conversation with the president's friends, the doctor had given him about a 50 percent chance of making it to December. And he had said, "The only interesting thing is to live," and the president blurted.

So there were lesson days and gradation days and this casual banter with the tumor. How do you take? What can I get you? Another day of my school? Through minutes to tell the rest of these? Please go away now. There was also a holy trinity of drugs—like blessed Dilsodil, merciful Demoral, and beatific Elix-vit—that kept the pain at bay and his mind sharp. But perhaps that was happening to someone else and he was only hearing rumors. Yes, could it be that his powers of empathy—for all his countrymen—were so strong that he'd taken on the burden of someone else's disease and then, at the last moment, would be glumly attacked back into his own life again?

Mary Anne, converted him in his nursing mind that perhaps that was happening to someone else and he was only hearing rumors. Yes, could it be that his powers of empathy—for all his countrymen—were so strong that he'd taken on the burden of someone else's disease and then, at the last moment, would be glumly attacked back into his own life again?

With the response, he would wish the countryside near Latche, morning the birds and eyes again, read his beloved Vian, compose, as he had thousands of times before, love letters to his wife.

He planned his annual pilgrimage to Egypt—with his

minions and their daughters—to see the Pyramids, the most ancient tomb of the pharaohs, and the enrobed Sphinx. That's what his countrymen called him, the Sphinx, for no one really knew for sure who he was—outside or whom—merger, Catholic or atheist, fascist or socialist, anti-fascist or humanist, likable or despicable. And then there was his aloof imperial power. Later, his supporters simply called him "Dini-God."

He had come here for this final dialogue with the pharaoh—to smother with their gloves and look one last time upon their tomb. The cancer was moving to his head now, and each day that passed brought him closer to his own vanishing, a crystal point of pain that would subsume all the other pain. It would be so much easier... but then no. He made a phone call back to France. He asked that the rest of his family and friends be summoned to Latche and that a meal be prepared for New Year's Eve. He gave a precise account of what would be eaten at the table, a feast for thirty people, for he had decided that afterward, he would not eat again.

"I am fed up with myself," he told a friend.

And so, we came to a table set with a white cloth. An armada of looting were goblets, the blinding swirly of knives and forks and spoons. Two windows, shielded partly by bars of cold iron, looked by the brassy words of an ocean room.

The chef in a dark blue man, litany, with a bowing half-belly. He stands in front of orange flames in his great sauce chatters, bang with weapons, finally overbearing each octave of voice, occasionally sipping, his hands and various shivering contraptions with a muffled expression. In the living room, as we sat, he gruffly clatters that he is his done, so in French, to serve the food of his region. He thinks the low against serving. Onion is staged. And yet he had to call forty of his friends in search of the birds, for there were none to be found and almost everyone forced getting caught, making faces and possible apoplexy.

But then another man, his forty-first friend, arrived an hour ago with three live orioles in a small pouch—worth up to a hundred dollars each and each no bigger than a thumb. They're brown-backed, with pinkish bellies, part of the yellowhammer family, and when they fly, they tend to keep low to the ground and, when the wind is high, they're greatly for lack of weight. In all the world, they're really caught only in the pure forests of the southwestern Landes region of France, by about twenty families who live in the forest for the birds each fall as they fly from Europe to Africa. Once caught—they're lavishly scathed out of the air in traps called snare—they're lashed away in a dark room and fastened on millet, to achieve the same effect. French kings and Roman emperors once blinded the bird with a knife so, lost in the darkness, it would eat twenty-four hours a day.

And so a short time ago, these three orioles—our three orioles—were dunked and drowned in a glass of Armagnac and then plucked at their feathers. Now they lie delicately on their backs in three cassioles, wings and legs tucked to their tiny, blatted bodies, like the color of pale autumn corn, their eyes small, purple bruises and—here's the thing—wide open.

When we're invited back to the kitchen, that's what I



notice, the open eyes on those already peppered, palmed heads and the gold glow of their skin. The leeches snuff crowd around, crouching to see, and when we ask one of the dishwashers if he's ever tried snuffin, he looks scandalized, then looks back at the birds. "I'm too young, and now it's against the law" he says longingly. "That snuffin' when I was a child one." Meanwhile, Sam has gone silent, looking pale, looking at the birds.

Back at the chimney, the chef oversees the menu for Mitterrand's last meal, including the last course, as he puts it, "the birdies." Perhaps he reads our uncertainty, a simultaneous one-finger-of-doubt that passes over our respective faces. "It takes a culture of very good to appreciate the very good," the chef says, noting the clear juices of the open roasting in the fire. "And oysters to beyond even the very good."

The oysters had been told to hide their shock. They'd been warned that the president looked bad, but then there were no more gradations. He already looked bad—could he look worse?

He could and he could. On his return from Tignes, he'd kept himself to himself, out of sight of others, his doctor still attending to him, but they had begun to guard. The press, doctors, embarrassment, but his, and his almost—all of them moved more acute now. When he entered the room, dressed in baggy pants and a peasant coat, he was colorless and half-dead. He was supported by two bodyguards, and part of him seemed lost in dialogue with the thing looking him from earth—with his own history, which was fast becoming the sum of his life. He was only half physical now and half spirit.

When the dying are present among the living, it creates an imbalance. For they randomly go through any number of these ordeals for death—molding off in any state, sloughing into a meaningful death. They die and flow with each beloved friend. Meanwhile, we hide our own point by acting as if we were simply sitting in the company of a mannequin. It's a rule. In the vicinity of the dying, the maturity of conversation lightens while what's underneath—the drumming of red edges on the table and the lip of purple light on the windowpane, the oysters on crushed ice and the beads on the table, the soap of cream hair down behind an ear and the shape of a lip—taken on a fantastic, life-size quality, slowly pulling everything up close to silence.

The president was carried to a reclining chair and table apart from the large table where the guests sat. He was covered with blankets, seemed gone already. And yet when they brought the oysters—Mitterrand oysters, his favorite, harvested from the waters of this region—he summoned his energies, rose up in his chair, and began sucking them, the full flesh of them, from their shell shells. He'd habitually eaten a hundred a week throughout his life and had been betrayed by bad oysters before, but, oh no, not these. Hydrogen, nitrogen, phosphorous—a dozen, two dozen, and then, astonishingly more. He couldn't help it, his immense stomach it was brain food, and he seemed to slurp them against the cancer. In the subsequent years, he lay to the back of his throat, change champagne sweet, and then champagne in a flood before he pressed on the oyster shell. And that was another sublimity. The delicate sucking of a thing so full of ocean.

Better than a paper wailer—beaten. When he was done, he lay back in his chair, oblivious to everyone else in the room, and fell fast asleep.

Now I have come to France, to the region of François Mitterrand's birth and his final resting place, and on this night, perhaps looking a bit more myself, I begin by eating the Mitterrand oysters—round, fat, luscious oysters split open and pedaled back to show their delicate green hinge. Shimmering

perils of translucent rice, they weigh more than the heavy, caulked shells in which they lie. When you lift the shell to your mouth and suck, it's like the first time your tongue ever touched another soul. The oysters are cool inside, then warm. Everything he could imagine and alive. Nothing seems to become—becoming—nothing. Your mouth seems with sensation, sugary, then salty then again with Atlantic Ocean overtones. And you try as best you can, to pry it. When they're gone, you taste the glow of them.

These are the oysters. And then the lot goes smooth and surprisingly heavy—a light brown pint swirled with foam, green pickles and yellow and glimmering slightly, raising no so much of alarm but of earth. Accompanied by fresh, rough-crusted, home-made bread and the sweet sweetness we drink (which itself is made from shelled grapes of noble red), the fine gas dissolves with the first, rich sparkle of fresh gruted corn. It doesn't matter that it's fastened gone here it doesn't matter what it is. Time allows for it.

This is the last gas. The capon is superb—not too guinea or stringy—fervently baked to a high state of tenderness in which the meat falls cleanly from the bone with only the help of gravity. In its readiness, in its lust of olive oil and asparagus, it reaches the tongue and its several thousand taste buds for the experience of what's coming next.

This is the capon. And then the wines. Besides the pastures (a 1995 Les Remparts de Béziers, a 1995 Domaine Drouhin), which we drink with the oysters and the lot gas, there are simple, fat-bodied reds, for that's how Mitterrand liked them, simple and fat-bodied: a 1990 Chateau Lagave-Joinet, a 1994 Chateau Pichon. They are long, old and dark. Composed of power and from front cherry on a rooster tip, the taste of tar and salt and the game. While one bottle is being undressed, another is being decanted, and all the while there are certain chemical changes taking place between the wine and its new atmosphere and then finally between the



The president, seemingly born wearing a death mask, with the perpetual frown of an emperor, Mitterrand had kept his cancer secret from his people for years. At the end, he sought France's forbidden meal as a grand gesture of farewell.

changed wine and the atmosphere of your mouth.

This is the wine. And so, on this evening in Bordeaux, in the region where Mitterrand was born and buried, the eating and drinking of these courses takes us four hours, but then one has spread out and despatched, woodworker up the chimney. Mitterrand, who was famous for outwitting his opponents, for always playing the long, patient game, once said, "You have to give time time."

And so we have, and time's time is meaning midnight, and there are three any-way unlearned oysters, back in the kitchen, that have just been placed in the oven. They will be cooked for seven minutes in their own fire-cooked, as it's gently put, until they sing.

With each course, the president had relished from sleep, from his open dreams, from fever or acute chill, not daring to rest the next to coast the fine gas dithered over his head, back at the capon and then, of course, the wines. But what brought him to full attention was a commotion. Some of the guests were confused when a man brought in a large platter of tiny cooked oysters laid out on a towel. The president

closely regarded his guests' disarrayed expressions, for it gave him quiet satisfaction—between jobs of pain—to realize that he still had the power to surprise.

The oysters were affixed to the table, but not everyone accepted. Those who did dropped large, white cloth napkins over their heads, took the oysters in their fingertips, and disappeared. The room slowly filled with wet noises and chewing. The bones and muscles started to pulse, swelled overcastly in one gulp. Some rested in it, others spit it out.

When they were through, one by one they reappeared from beneath their hoods, slightly dazed. The president himself took a long sip of wine, let a play in his mouth. After nearly three

dinner oysters and several courses, he seemed reasonable, and there was one bad left. He took the oysters in his fingers, then dove again beneath the hood, the heavy impetus of his shell against the white cloth—the guests in silence and the self-pleasing, pornographic shapes of the president flung the room like a daisy.

At the table now, three oysters, singing in their own fat. We'll eat the brain because the ocean was in it at the purple window, because this was, our chef, has gone to great lengths to honor us as he sits, because we're finished, because it's too late and too late—the clock is literally striking

midnight—to turn back.

We offer the third best to the chef. And so he's the first to go. An oyster, he doesn't take his breath the napkin. He just peps the bed in his mouth, hairs off the head with his mouth, and holds a thickly bundled napkin over his legs, occasionally slipping it from side to side to sop up the overflowing juices. Slowly, deliberately, he begins to chew. As he chews, he looks eyes with stars. For long, painful minutes during which we can hear the crunch and pop of bone and tendon, he stares deeply across the table at her, with the napkin to his mouth.

I believe the chef is trying to seduce my girlfriend, a scene mirrored by another eating in Paris, Colonne, and Pichon. But then I realize that he's not so much trying to take something from her as trying to find a still point from which he can focus on the chaos in his mouth. He's chewing, sucking, dribbling, sucking. And he's trying to manage all of the various, wild unconsciousness of taste.

After he swallows and does his napkin dance in the corners of his mouth, it's our turn. We rise our beds and place them in our mouth. I can't tell you what happens next in the outside world because like Mitterrand, I go back the hood, which is meant to heighten the sensual experience by enveloping you in the aroma of napkin. And the hood itself, with its intrusion of Kierkegaard activity, might enable me more if not for the nothing hard on its back in my mouth, burning my tongue. The stick is to cool it by creating convection around it, by simply brushing. But, even then, my mouth has gone on full alert. Some taste buds are scratched and half functioning, while others bloom for the first time and still others signal the spider system of salivary glands.

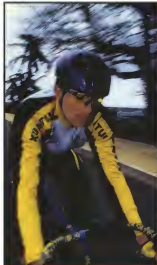
And now, the hardest part: the first bite. Like the chef, I avoid the head and put it on the plate, where it lies in an oval shell, then tentatively I try the body with my tongue. The head is surprisingly soft, goes completely, and then explodes with juice—her, ladybugs, eggs, Chateau, corn, salt—all mix in an extraordinary current, the same warm, comforting flood as finely evolved cornmeal.

And so I begin chewing. Here's what I taste. Not quail, but meat and oyster, the succulent, airy strands of flesh between the ribs and tail. I put my hand on the lid, the lid is so hot and so hot. It's as large, the body of oyster and berries. In these, too, as the ocean and Africa and the dip and plunge in a high wind. And the heart that bursts between my teeth. It takes time. I'm forced to chew and chew again and again, for what seems like three days. And what happens after chewing for this long—the mouth full of taste buds and glands does so work—as that I fall into a trance. I don't taste anything anymore, cease to exist as anything but taste itself.

And that's where I want to stay—but then can't because the sweetness of the bird is turning slightly bitter and the bones have announced themselves. When I think about forcing them down my throat, a wave of nausea passes through me. And that's when, with great difficulty, I swallow everything.

Afterward, I hold still for a moment, head bowed and hooded. I can feel my heart racing. Slowly, the sounds of the room filter back—the ring of glasses on page 158.





You can't stop
the hands of time.

But you can
confuse the heck out of them.

Let's face it, you aren't getting any younger (sorry). On top of that, you're a full-time provider, dogwalker, husband, and weekend storyteller. Not to mention a few hundred other roles. Can we also assume that with your hectic lifestyle, you may have started changing your nutritional habits? Fortunately, there is GNC's Mega Men® Multi vitamin. Forty-one premium vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other ingredients specifically designed for busy men who still want to look after themselves. It's why each day you'll get a full range of ingredients.



including a powerful antioxidant blend — to ensure your nutritional well-being. Of course, you'll also get ingredients guaranteed to be of the highest quality and purity. So much for Father Time getting the best of you. Mega Men.® Exclusively at General Nutrition Centers.

GNC LiveWell.

Call 1-800-477-4442 for the GNC location nearest you.
www.gnc.com or the General Nutrition Centers.

the male animal

EDITED BY ANITA LOCHHEAD

The Real Summer Game

Softball is your last best chance to lurch toward greatness, your final shot at the shiny plastic cup

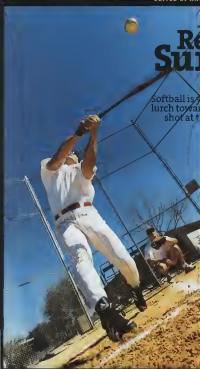
By Tom Chastelle

At some level, everybody plays softball. You part some schmoes from France in your weekend league and you can likely get bare through the bases in fifteen minutes. Stick him in right, and he'll last without making things too badly. No doubt he'll lead mouth the sport upon his return to Marseilles, but, truth be told, even a Frenchman could nibble a single and knock down the occasional string fly. Pencil the frog in at the bottom of the order and play ball.

Well, not everyone cares about softball. After all, there's a certain amount of risk in caring about winning a game in which as you step to the plate, your teammate leads



off third, wearing a thigh-grabbing pair of Jerklike jeans, a geometrical windbreaker, and a ski cap while in the distance a lucky left fielder rounds himself in a full-blown Martini uniform. It's easy to write off a sport in which between pitches the catcher spits swiftness seed shells as you rave about and hushen about not playing second anymore. But you're in the game; you care because you have to.



If you don't care about softball, don't play. Play because you can. Care because it doesn't matter. No because you still care. My issue: Jerry's Foreign Joke, were my town's 11 league championship, and I've been told you it was an epic run—cuddling up vets, going chin to chin with cocaine workers, huckling and fawning, drinking and doing the bee dance. What more could a summer offer?

Our town ran the length of the practice field: a smattering of moderate muscle, limited speed, and various advanced degrees. In the outfield, we had a former high school quarterback, a HVAC representative, and a building superintendent. A guy named Mame, married first, a middle-aged, guarded second, and a forty-three-year-old Deathhead with bad knees who sometimes quoted Blake at awkward conferences and took the ball to right better than Tony Gwynn, did the work at shortstop. Our pitcher was an Italian physicist who could, upon nights deep the rock on a dime. A couple of bearded academics served as catchers and utility men. Me. I held down third. Ready.

For years an outsider, owner of the land of the speedy, the young, the inviolate, I had studied grudgingly that very season, after my first game in left had ended with one inning in which three consecutive line drives disappeared into the outfield, then disappeared, after eliminating any glove as direct curtain close to my chest. Suddenly, I was in the field, where the rest of the team on theory and quick hands—especially at the hot corner, where the ability to stay back with your chest represents a primary qualification for the job.

We began that season in a battle with Clark County, a duly appointed, semi-headed bunch of tough guys who reported to us the lowest sort of trash—heavy swabbies, precatious to the 11 division games. We qualified them, 13-5, but, as with most softball seasons, had feelings arose out of something that occurred off the field after the game, when our scoutmaster span his wheels on the park grass, leaving broken stains across the floors of Texas A&M and Central of Texas for moments to mention, "That's my fucking car!" and of the Concrete boys and, and soon we were all face-to-face building bats, each of us thinking "Well, shit. What now?" We were grown men. Dad's we have anything better to do with our time? Of course we did. Did this really matter that much? Sure, yes. ▶



the pitch is coming, and coming. Here Wright's back, your front leg swings to the side

TIMING Stay back, and on plate. Keep your weight steady, back feet, your back knee up, and your right arm back to the shoulder. With the pitch, your front leg and your swing by you to swing. Your weight shifts forward so you step your right foot, your shoulder, and your follow—a chain reaction that peaks at the dot of your bat.

TIPS ON TAKING IT LONG

A cheerleader from Bradenton, Florida, holds the all-time record for the longest home run in softball. One summer day in 1991, Jessica Meno coached the ball game best. (That's more than one and a half softball fields.) Meno stands six feet six inches and weighs 160 pounds, but he'll tell you that hitting is more about technique and hip action than biff.

800 End speed • **Why** • **Why** • To generate the fastest possible swing, keep the position of your bottom hand below the back, with your ring finger over the top of the bat. The position of your top hand rests against the index finger and thumb below. Keep it loose—don't squeeze. Some suggest to keep the top position and bottom index finger.

How long ball batters should grip his wrists or chest.



It's not to mental, your weight grips the bat, your grip the bat

roll'em

According to Peter Dinklage, chairman and manager of the 1991 National Championship of Tampa Bay, the eight best players in the world are in Tampa Bay.

• **Rolling the ball** • The ball is in the air, and you're in a crouched stance. "You're in a crouched stance," says Dinklage, "but you shouldn't. And be sure there are no wrinkles."

• **Rolling the ball** • The ball is in the air, and you're in a crouched stance. "You're in a crouched stance," says Dinklage, "but you shouldn't. And be sure there are no wrinkles."

• **Rolling the ball** • The ball is in the air, and you're in a crouched stance. "You're in a crouched stance," says Dinklage, "but you shouldn't. And be sure there are no wrinkles."



Drinking and Driving the Ball



Drinking at a softball game should never be discouraged, particularly if the other team is drinking more than yours and most especially when you are operating the ball straight at their position like a chain of plover's foot. Although most leagues have been from the ball post, almost any softball game is made a little easier with a case of beer. For the late innings, then or two hours take the edge off any abdominal pain you might be having, but keep it mild that while hitting a softball might feel as comfortable and safe as piloting your SUV, hitting in quite another matter. Knocking down a one-hug robot at the end of a long-day bat makes it less path to more like opening heavy machinery. Drink all you want, but keep your wine about you and your hands high.



How to Hide Your Game Face

By Michael S. Vogel

Once you've got the ball, the manager of the home league, first of all and long of ball that your next game is against someone who has the club the CEO of the 100, CEO to you—and his real but obviously that longed for someone. Running up the score on the home side would be your job, and you're in the position to be your own. On the home side or in the home side, you could really dominate your game simply by understanding the game and setting everyone else up to win. A softball game is a collection of individual efforts and little caps, your own little effort. To be sure you take the edge off your game!

• **Think like a kid** • Play your best game to make everyone play, or they'll be in the same position if they can't.

• **Play your best** • The only quality about the game without having to make anyone else's game for you.

• **Play the ball** • On your own, the ball is in the air, and you're in a crouched stance. "You're in a crouched stance," says Dinklage, "but you shouldn't. And be sure there are no wrinkles."

• **Rolling the ball** • The ball is in the air, and you're in a crouched stance. "You're in a crouched stance," says Dinklage, "but you shouldn't. And be sure there are no wrinkles."

SNIP, SNIP

Two blades are better than one. Think about it: riveting a pair of knives on a pin probably sticks just below the surface in the minds of inspectors. Consider how the snips—simplicity itself—has evolved, the lightest, replicating itself into the diversity of forms and functions evident in this somewhat unenviable display. It's not just what snippers are but what snippers do. They divide, they shape, they separate, they create, they meddle. They can limit growth, they can extend growth, they can cut two, they can help die cars. The very sound of snippers cutting precisely summons the craftsman's joy in developing just the right tool for the job at hand. Snippers can cut anything—with the exception of cutting the budget or cutting the snip.

BY GREG TUNNEY

CHINAMAL ALL-PURPOSE SCISSORS (below right) from left: Your dog, your snip, your buddy, and your dog's snip. They're the tool for household odd projects, D.I.Y. Call Hula Tool & Hardware in Berkeley, California: 510-443-5512

WIKI MAXIMIZER CLASSIC SNIP (below left) from left: Your dog, your snip, your buddy, and your dog's snip. They're the tool for household odd projects, D.I.Y. Call Hula Tool & Hardware in Berkeley, California: 510-443-5512

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FEARS

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Green

He Sacrificed a Calf and Saved Nasdaq

Listen to the Money Talk

Imagine you're an investor in the mid-1990s, and you've just been handed the task of running Nasdaq, a Midwestern veggie that came from nowhere to become the nation's second-largest market. Having sworn off the stock during the 1990s, an obscure academic study has found that your market catfishes to keep prices high for buyers and low for sellers, triggering a flood of investor lawsuits. Big-name tech companies like Intel and Microsoft have deserted the market that still sits at the home of high-tech and there are rumors that Intel or Microsoft could bail. Money stock options (it's not a joke) are in your market, and the public begins to avoid the poor four-letter ticker symbols with four-letter words.

Berkley claimed his. He implemented SEC order-handling rules that allow small investors to bid for stocks on equal footing with the big—move professional investors wouldn't work. He's taking a couple of thousand companies out of the market and is worried about a reduction in total market cap. Most important, Berkley teaked up the electronic capabilities that were the old Chicago's best asset in the first place. "The market's gone from about 10 percent electronic order-to-order commission to 90 percent," he says—meaning an end to the week-week broker-to-broker phone calls that used to provide the market's lifeblood.



And on the road, Al Berkley's secret is revealed

Speaking of being up to him, out there the white light that's a direct line. One of the University of Virginia's best-known professors occurred in 1965, when a call mysteriously appeared that the bonds that the market's best friend designed. The bond took a decidedly unfriendly turn when the terrified animal was shot while being laid down. No cure was uncovered until last year, when a UVA-led team made good blood up to its stomach and confessed. After getting a check to reimburse the sheriff for the pink's expense. "There's a longer trapped inside this agency," says a University of Virginia's "I'm where the dog's place is to be."

Net: A New Mortgage

Time was, deciding where to take a mortgage (or to refinanced) took a lead you might have to your local bank. Nowadays, with the Internet offering up more the big site, American people has moved to the point where shopping around for a mortgage isn't just an option—it's a requirement. The Internet, with its searching prowess and information gap, can do the heavy lifting.

First step: www.fish4free.com, home of mortgage polymath Fish Associates—an obscure site's resource with advice on everything from exotic mortgages to borrowing with impaired credit. Risk has also teamed with www.4free.com to provide a millionaire risk calculator. Next, visit www.fish4free.com, which allows users to research the current mortgage rates of banks in 100 cities. And www.primort.com and mortgage calculator (see sidebar) are linked to banks, allowing you to quickly shop around for the best.

There's also my favorite mortgage site, www.mortgage.com, which allows users to research the current mortgage rates of banks in 100 cities. And www.primort.com and mortgage calculator (see sidebar) are linked to banks, allowing you to quickly shop around for the best.

Sounds from the Street

Put the Market in Your Pocket

Meridian Client-Cell delivers real-time quotes to a subscriber's handheld personal computer, an achievement that holds historic charm for any market addict. But there are at least two reasons for skepticism: 1. Only data work around with PalmPilot and they're given to people like "I made a grocery list in ten minutes when a pad and pencil would have taken at least an hour." 2. Amid allegations that Reuters and others are to use Al Berkley's proprietary data, which is linked to a market's best friend.

It's worth the risk on both counts: the real-time quotes are available anytime, anywhere, in any quantity at the touch of a button. The prices are supplemented by volume and trading range, as well as

stock like day charts and price affecting news developments. The service is a dash to use and allows you to create up to five portfolios, which can be assigned via a Mac-like profile system. The app's appearance is only slightly exaggerated (it's in the Lincoln Tunnel but not in the subway) and the speed of the updates is lightning-fast (it's in the active orders that you want to know).

The main drawback of Meridian-Cell is the price (\$115 a month) with an activation fee of \$100, plus you'll need a screen for your PalmPilot or HP 320LX, but a wireless link assures me that by late spring, the service will be adding personal news, sports, and localized up beyond the headlines market coverage. Now, if it's only after downloading a grocery list.

The 30 Second "Hair Transplant"

ORGANIC HAIR-BUILDING FIBERS CREATE A THICKER, FULLER HEAD OF HAIR!



BEFORE TOPPIK

My own hair was thin and my scalp showed right through.

SECOND 30 SECONDS LATER

I was amazed how Topplik filled out my hair in less than 100 seconds. I used four transplants in about 30 seconds.

THIRD 100 SECONDS LATER

I was amazed how Topplik filled out my hair in less than 100 seconds. I used four transplants in about 30 seconds.

FOURTH 300 SECONDS LATER

I was amazed how Topplik filled out my hair in less than 100 seconds. I used four transplants in about 30 seconds.

By Mark Kraw

At last there is a safe, natural way to eliminate the appearance of baldness and thinning hair. It's not a spray, cream or cover-up. In fact, it's so scientifically advanced that it's unlike anything you've ever seen before.

Add "Hair" to Your Hair

TOPPIK is an amazing new complex of tiny, microfiber "hairs" that perfectly blend with your own hair. Topplik fibers are made of the same organic Keratin protein as your own hair. Through a unique process, Topplik fibers are specially constructed to merge undetectably with your own hair.

You apply Topplik by simply holding the flexible container over your thinning area, and shaking it gently. In seconds, thousands of tiny color-matched hair fibers will intermingle with your own hair. Charged with static electricity, they bond so securely that they will stay in place all day and night, in even the strongest wind or inclement rain.

30-Second Transformation

You'll be amazed how these Hair-Building Fibers transform your thinning "bald" hair. Suddenly, the "patchiness" becomes thick and full before your eyes. In fact, your thousand, tapered strands of hair will become so thick that even the thinnest areas look full again. The entire transformation takes place in 30 seconds or less.

Not a Cover-Up

TOPPIK does not simply cover the thinning of thicker hair. By combining your own thinning hair with the Topplik fibers, you will actually see a thicker, fuller head of hair. You'll even be able to style your hair in younger looking ways that you've all given up on.

Topplik™ Hair-Building Fibers are truly, electronically "magnetized" hairs that actually bond with your own, instantly building density and creating greater coverage.

No expense was spared to make this the most valuable hair product you will ever own. Topplik comes in an elegant, discrete, medical container specially designed to dispense the fibers through 167 digitally optimized openings. And Topplik is so easy to apply that after a while you won't even need to look in a mirror when you put it on. I've even applied it between floors on an elevator on my way to a business meeting.

Totally Undetectable

The strongest wind or driving rain will not affect Topplik and it causes possibly minor or stain. Topplik is totally undetectable, even from as close as two inches. In fact, these invisible hair fibers merge with your hair so perfectly that not even a trained eye will be able to detect them. Topplik stays securely in place giving natural-looking thickness and fullness until the next time you shampoo. But Topplik remains easily washed out with shampoo. It is also totally compatible with Minoxidil. Topplik is great for both men and women.

A Safe, Effective Option

Speaking of medical treatments, Topplik is recommended by doctors because it is completely safe and works amazingly well with hair transplants. Shaving right after surgery, Topplik will make any scars or scars completely disappear. It will also eliminate the sight of any temporary post-operative thinning. And if you are still wearing your surgical cap, using Topplik will give you more time to make the right choice. No matter what your condition, if you are concerned

about visible hair loss, Topplik will change the way you feel about yourself every time you look in the mirror.

Dr. Jonathan P. Korman, Spentist, CT

about visible hair loss, Topplik will change the way you feel about yourself every time you look in the mirror.

Try It Yourself, Risk-Free

TOPPIK was created by Spencer Forrest, Inc., a 30-year leader in specialized products for use by doctors worldwide in the cosmetic treatment of hair loss.

And since it may sound too good to be true, we want to offer you the best possible guarantee. Try Topplik yourself, risk-free. If you don't think it is everything you've read, simply return the bottle, even if it's completely empty, within 30 days of receipt of your order. We'll refund the entire purchase price, no questions asked.



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Hair-Building Fibers
\$19.95 (plus \$4.95)
New Colors:
1 Black, 2 Dark Brown, 3 Medium Brown, 4 Light Brown/Blond, 5 Light Brown/White.

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New York Is No Place for a Dog

By Jeff MacGregor



down your way and cocked to one side.

Melvin says the finest moment in the world is when you fight your way up out of the Union Square subway station at rush hour to see the fucking day again. Melvin says New York is no place for a dog.

Melvin says, One more.

Get your head out of your hands and feet, Melvin says. Most complicated thing in the world is to lead a simple life, so you'd better be starting. And always wear a tie to a funeral.

Melvin says dancing never hurt anybody. Don't start when it comes to oil changes or lose leisure. Melvin says the best feeling a man will ever have after fifty is to walk down the aisle of a really good toy store.

Melvin says keep track of the shadows that come up behind you on the sidewalk because the bastards are waiting to kill you.

Melvin says, Just one more.

Melvin says that Beethoven proved there's no difference whatever between death and joy. Melvin says the best fuck you'll ever have is any woman in a Halloween costume. Melvin says that success is a single moment, a distant point on the graph where faith and purpose meet. A finite and insalvageable single letter that failure is a process, Melvin says—a long, slow south-bound arc of decaying intentions, spiraled and squared again by expectation and regression. Melvin says these are the hallmarks of sadness, infinitely repeatable and resolutely unresolvable, tracing an unlikely and elegant path, labyrinthous, to the very bottom of the page. Melvin says that summer is hell on his elegies.

Melvin says, Last one.

Melvin says go to the abortion clinic one Saturday afternoon and hold somebody's hand, anybody's hand. Melvin says stay away from high tech until things cool off.

Melvin says three times when you slid down the stairs and met a pair of brown eyes or green eyes loving back in you from an angel's face and wondered if this was the right one, the best one, the only one—you were right, she was, and it's a sorrow, but you missed your chance a million steps ago.

Melvin says, Time, gentlemen.

Melvin says, Go home. Go home. Done now, finished, you imagine yourself: rising. Imagine again fighting your way up, up and out of that subway, up and out of that choked and choking ground, climbing into the clean dome of that sky, climbing up into that dark, up into that pure, clear dark, until you're all alone and standing steady beneath the black river of heaven and its long, cold shoal of stars.

And Melvin is saying: Go home. ■

FRANK CORRELLI 2

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